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'"*Die, and trouble me no more?*" *she repeated, with outstretched hands.*'

ST KATHERINE'S BY THE TOWER

A NOVEL

BY

WALTER BESANT

AUTHOR OF

'ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF MEN' 'ARMOREL OF LYONESSE' ETC

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

WITH TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHARLES GREEN

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ST. KATHERINE'S BY THE TOWER

PART II—(*continued*)

CHAPTER IV

THE FAMILY COUNCIL

And now, our sick girl growing daily weaker, with no improvement in her mental or in her bodily condition, it was resolved to call upon George if he would go away. On a voyage perhaps, or somewhere by land—anywhere, so that he removed his presence. This, you remember, was the advice of Dr. Lorrymore. And, in order to give as much solemnity as possible to this invitation or request, it was resolved that George should be summoned to a meeting of Council of the Hospital itself, held in no other place than the Chapter House itself.

The Chapter House is one of two rooms, standing on the north side of the church, and entered by a door close to the Duke of Exeter's monument. The other room is called the Court Room. In them are kept the muniments, ancient records, and archives of the foundation. Both rooms are wainscotted with cedar, and adorned with coats of arms finely painted and gilt. In the Chapter Room there is a long table, with chairs for the Society. No resolution can be valid in this fraternity without the presence and vote of one Sister at least.

The Rev. Dr. Lorrymore, as Brother of the Hospital, and in the absence of the Master, presided at this meeting. On his right sat Sister Katherine; on his left, my father as High Bailiff and Steward. The Lieutenant with a chair next to his sister—by invitation, not by right, as not belonging to the Society. My mother sat next to my father, and I stood behind their chairs. The Apparitor of the Hospital stood at the door.

By order of the President, he admitted George. This poor lad, who had ever been the

lightest-hearted of lads, the most confident, and the boldest, now stood before us, hanging his head like a criminal. Yet, what had he done?

'Sir,' said the President, addressing the Lieutenant, 'we are all, I believe, of one mind in this matter. You would yourself wish to address your son?'

'No, sir. In every Court the President pronounces the verdict of the Court, and the sentence.'

'Sir,' he next addressed my father. 'The business concerns your daughter—your only daughter. You would wish to address this young man?'

'When you have first pronounced our mind,' said my father.

'In that case I will proceed. You cannot but understand very well, George, that this untoward event, which we all deplore so deeply, has engaged our most careful and painful attention. We have taken such advice as we could obtain; we have considered all the cases recorded in history which appeared parallel; we have searched everywhere for remedies which would be likely to meet the

case of this afflicted child. Frankly, we can find none. The books of ancient physicians cannot help; the advice of modern physicians proves ineffectual. We do not find that by anything you could have done or said her disorder can be attributed to you. It appears that some days before you arrived she was complaining in vague terms to her brother. She was disquieted; she seemed in pain. It is obvious, therefore, though the bodily symptoms are hard to be discovered, even by the child's mother, that the attack, such as he saw it when it actually seized her, had been for some days preparing.

'Our consultations have been entirely with the view of the recovery of Sylvia to health and strength. That, I am very certain, George Bayssallance, you would yourself desire first and foremost.'

'First and foremost,' he replied, huskily.

'Since that is so—and I expected nothing less—the way is prepared for us. My son, we can think of no other remedy save one. We still find no abatement of the worst symptoms. To think of you, to speak of you, even

the bare mention of your name, causes her distress and suffering indescribable; while, should she see you, I tremble for the consequences. I confess, George, that I cannot understand this thing. Had it happened in a Roman Catholic country I should, by virtue of the authority committed to me at my ordination, have exorcised the demons who I should then believe to be holding her body and mind. If the thing had happened two hundred years ago, I should certainly have committed the wise woman of the Precinct, Margery Habbijam, to the stake and the flames as a witch——'

'You might do worse, even now,' said Sister Katherine. 'The girl is surely bewitched. Nothing else can be the matter with her.'

'But,' continued the clergyman, 'we are now in the enlightened eighteenth century, and we no longer believe either in witchcraft or in possession by the Evil One. For myself, I firmly hold and will maintain, that even in these latter days the Evil One may be permitted to enter into the soul of men who have

abandoned themselves to a long indulgence in crime. Witness the blind rage and demoniac fury of the monsters who now have the power in Paris, who have exiled their nobles, seized with sacrilegious hand the property of the Church, driven out their clergy, and have murdered their King. This, I say, I believe, when a man has cut himself away from the saving power of grace, the Devil may enter into him for his swifter and more complete destruction. But that the Devil should have power over the soul of this sweet and innocent child, who was full of love for you, young man, her betrothed—that, I say, I cannot believe.'

'She is bewitched,' Sister Katherine repeated, setting her lips.

'Alas! I fear it,' said my mother.

'Set aside, however, as a question which cannot be answered, why this affliction has been permitted, or what earthly causes can account for it, the only question we have to consider is, what we are to do.'

George bowed his head.

'Very well. Now the only remedy we

can find is that you yourself should go away.'

George turned to his aunt.

'Yes, George,' said Sister Katherine, 'you must go away—clean out of her sight.'

George turned next to his father.

'My son,' said the Lieutenant, 'I cannot think otherwise. You must go away.'

'You must go, George,' said my mother.

'When you are once gone,' continued the President, 'when the child understands that she need be in no fear of meeting you, or of hearing your voice, we think that by degrees her terrors will wear themselves away. Your voice, your image, will gradually leave her brain, where, at present, its occupation causes her so much suffering. We think that, you once out of the way, there is a chance that she will recover. If you stay, there seems to be no chance, since time doth only aggravate the disease. We think this; that is to say, let us not deceive ourselves, we only hope this may happen. In such a case there is nothing left us but to pray and to hope. It may be that her fragile frame is already too much weakened

by the sufferings which have torn her; it may be that already the Angel of Death—nay, dear madam'—for my mother was weeping—'what can we do but still to pray, still to hope, and still be brave to face the worst? It seems to me possible for Sylvia to recover if you are out of the way. Will you therefore agree with us and go away—go to sea once more—go out of her sight, and even, perhaps, out of her mind and memory?'

'It is hard, sir——' George began.

'It is indeed hard for you. It is equally hard for her. It is hard for all of us. Yet go you must. You would not, by continuing to show your love for one who has learned, in some way or other, to hate you, thereby endanger her life?'

'Sir, I shall always love Sylvia, whatever happens.'

'Then, my son, you will do what is best for her. That you cannot choose but do.'

'If by going away I can restore her to her right mind, let me go away, though I never see her again. If, by dying myself, I could restore her to happiness, let me die.'

'It is well said. I hope that she may be restored to life and a sound mind, and that you may return to find her well, and returned to her old affection.'

'George,' said my father, 'we have no evil thoughts of thee in what hath passed. We have in no way blamed thee. It is with great sorrow that we have to drive thee forth, and at a time when there are worse perils at sea than tempest and hidden rocks. But it will be happier for all, believe me, when thou art gone.'

'Oh! George,' my mother pushed back her chair, and caught his hands, and kissed him. 'She who looked forwards so proudly to thy return! She who counted the hours, and would still be poring over the map to guess where thy ship might be! She who talked all day — the pretty innocent — of George and George, and always George! Oh! what have we done to deserve this trouble? What have we done? For what have we been punished?'

'Madam,' said his Reverence, 'remember, as I was preaching on Sunday last, that the

Tower of Siloam fell upon the innocent as well as upon the guilty. It is the property of evil that, like a torrent, it rolls over everything—the house of the unjust man, or the house of the just man alike; or like lightning, it falls equally upon the good and the bad; or like a pestilence, which piety alone cannot ward off. Yet who shall deny that we are in the hands of the living God? George, that torrent has overwhelmed us all; that lightning has fallen upon us; we are sinners, indeed; our good works, such as they are, avail us nothing; yet I know not that we are greater sinners than the rest of the world, who are unscathed by the forkèd fire.'

'I will go away,' he said, and left us with no more words.

Unhappily he did not instantly depart, but, seized either with the desire of once more beholding his mistress—a thing which to a lover is like the thirst of the sandy desert—or else anxious to say farewell, and out of her own mouth to hear the worst, he went out of the Chapter House across the Close, and so into the Master's House. Sylvia was

not in the parlour. He went into the garden, and there sitting in the summer-house he found her, warm and sheltered.

She was too weak to run away. At sight of her lover she could only shudder and moan and bury her hands in her face.

He fell upon his knees before her, not touching so much as the hem of her garment.

'Sylvia,' he cried, but his voice choked him, and he could say no more for a while.

'Sylvia,' he went on, presently; 'tell me, my dear, if you can, why you loathe me so?'

She shook her head.

'I cannot tell you,' she said.

'Have I done anything—or said anything? Has anything been reported or charged to me? What is it? Sylvia, is there any hope for me at all? If I go away, will you begin to think of me with kindness?'

'Alas!' she said, 'I cannot tell what will happen, whether you go or whether you stay.'

'You would like me to go away—order me to go, and I obey; nay, I have promised to go. You shall not see me any more unless, when I return, your heart has softened.

Bid me farewell, Sylvia. Grant me so much grace—and let me kiss your dear hand once before I go.'

She lifted her face. For a moment her eyes glowed again with the soft light of love. Then they hardened. She shivered—she turned her head—she held out her hand as if to push him away.

'Go,' she said.

He rose.

'Oh, nothing is of any use!' he cried. 'Your heart is harder than the nether millstone. You are changed indeed, Sylvia. I cannot believe that it is the same girl. But I will not reproach you. I will go. If I die, Sylvia—if you knew that I was dead and buried, and could trouble you no longer—then you would quickly recover and grow strong again and think of me no more. Well, my dear,' he added, gently, 'you shall grow strong. I will die, and you shall get well. What is it to me—to die—since you can love me no longer? Farewell—my dear—my dear. I will go away—and I will die—I will die. I will trouble you no more.'

But now she turned her face, and looked at him with wild eyes and gasping mouth. 'Die, and trouble me no more?' she repeated, with outstretched hands.

He took her words for a command. Alas! poor heart! She meant to show the horrible agony and dread that these words of his awakened in her heart. And when he strode swiftly away she cried aloud—but he heard her not—and fell senseless to the ground.

And there we—not knowing what had happened—found her, bereft of reason, and carried her within doors, and so to her bed.

CHAPTER V

THE ONLY QUESTION LEFT

You have seen George walking away with Archer, as if with an old friend—obedient to his mere invitation. In the evening I saw them together in earnest conversation. Next day, after the school was closed, I saw them take oars across the river to Oak Apple Dock, Rotherhithe, where they spent the evening together, still in earnest talk. And the next day the same, and every day; so that his old friends were forgotten and neglected, as if they were no longer to be regarded.

'I know not,' said George, long afterwards, 'why I chose this man for a familiar friend. At this time, however, I think we were all mad together—you, dear lad, and Sylvia, and I myself. Ay! we were all mad. There is no other explanation. For he is a villain—

a double-dyed villain. Why, his very looks proclaim him villain—his shifty eyes and his restless lips; and I always knew that he was a villain, from a boy up. I thrashed him for it when I was a boy. Yet, when he bade me follow him, I felt no surprise. I obeyed. It seemed natural that I should do what he told me to do. I followed him to his own house; and there, Nevill, I told him everything. Yes, I was not able to conceal anything. I was forced, somehow, to tell him my most secret thoughts. I told him how we were plighted before my last voyage—how I thought of nothing else all day long but Sylvia—and how I came home dancing on air, as they say, with the joy of getting to my Sylvia again, and how she received me. Good Lord! I told that man—that man—all—everything I felt. It makes me mad, now, to think that I told him so much. It seems like confessing one's sins to the Devil himself, who laughs in his sleeve the more you repent and weep.'

This, in fact, Archer did. He had some power over George; very likely only the

power of a crafty and subtle man. Some men are so subtle that they understand without being told what another man is thinking before he speaks. He drew George towards him and made him confess everything that had happened, and caused him to unbosom his whole thoughts. Then, no doubt, he laughed in his sleeve. You do not yet, I know, very well understand his villainy. Patience—you shall.

'So,' said Archer, slowly, as if the words had no sting in them (so the bos'n draws the cat slowly across the bleeding back). 'So your mistress, who formerly returned your passion, who has been in your thoughts night and day, morning and evening, every day—whose image you cannot tear from your heart, though she is so cold'—George groaned—'will now have none of you. This is strange, is it not?'

'It must be the work of the Devil! In no other way could it happen.'

'Doubtless. The Devil in these days is very busy. Can we, however, undo the Devil's work? That is the important question. For

the Devil works well, you see. He scamps not, nor does he botch his work. He is no paid hireling working by the hour. His work stands. Wars and battles, murders, ruined homes, families destroyed, honour disgraced. You can never undo the Devil's work. What will you do, my poor George?'

'I know not, Dick. I wish I were dead.'

'That,' replied Archer, 'is a very small thing, and easily attained. If all human wishes could be brought about as easily, the world would soon be happy. Everybody can convert himself into a dead man in a moment of time. For instance, there is an apothecary on Tower Hill; he is a friend of mine, but at present in a low way, and fears bankruptcy. All my friends are in a low way just at present. I could get from him a bottle which would kill you as quickly and as certainly as a cannon-ball through your vitals. Do you really mean it, George? Consider,' he added, earnestly, 'if you really wish to die.'

'Why not? What can I live for?'

'I have always thought,' this tempter went on, 'that when life has become burdensome to

a man, by any great misfortune, as by disease or poverty, or the loss of something he values more than life itself, it is only a laudable act for him to put an end to his life. There is nothing against it in Divine Writ—for the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" means surely, "Thou shalt not kill thy friend." As for an enemy, we have always done our best to kill as many of our enemies as we can. What else is the meaning of war? Did the Israelites after the giving of the Law desist from killing the Amorites, the Amalekites, the Moabites, and the rest? Certainly not. Therefore, I take it, the law says nothing against killing your enemy. Then, who is your greatest enemy when troubles intolerable fall upon you? Why, yourself! Therefore, you may lawfully kill that enemy—yourself. Judas Iscariot, when his conscience reproached him, killed himself. What else could he do? And the Romans, whose courage has always been approved, thought it the act of a brave and wise man to commit suicide when there was no longer any hope, and in order to escape worse things. Nero killed himself to

avoid being dragged to death by horses. What better could he do? Cato killed himself rather than receive a pardon from Cæsar.'

By such specious arguments did this man persuade to his own destruction this simple sailor, who was in despair, and ready to be convinced that any violence was permitted to such as were in his condition.

'Let us, therefore, say no more concerning self-murder as if it was a sin,' he went on. 'Let us rather consider your case. You say, and you are quite sure, that the girl hates the very sight of you?'

'Yes,' he groaned, 'and the very voice of me.'

'Ha!' the man smiled and smacked his lips, as if with satisfaction—'and she recoils from you—ha!—and regards you with disgust unfeigned. Ha! Now, in your case, my friend—my dear friend'—his eyes gleamed with excess of friendship—'the only question is, Can you still continue to live? Bereft of the only thing that makes your life desirable, condemned to live alone without the society of your mistress, having nothing to look for-

ward to but a long life of solitude and loneliness—can you still wish to live?'

'No, no,' he cried; 'let me die.'

'Why,' this false friend continued, 'did she not with her own voice order you to die? What were her very words? What did you tell me? Say it again. Let us make no doubt upon so important a point.'

'Sylvia said, "Die, and trouble me no more."'

'Why, there. You are quite sure that you have gotten the words correctly? Why, what doubt is left? Your dying will cause her'—here he turned away his head to conceal his smile—'will cause her, I say, the deepest satisfaction. Once rid of you, she will no longer fear to go abroad lest she should meet you face to face—when you are in your grave she will come forth again, smiling and happy. You say that she hath grown thin and pale, and appears to be rapidly wasting away. Why, man, if you truly love the girl——'

'Love her? With all my heart and soul!'

'And in spite of all would do anything that could pleasure her? I say that there seems no room for doubt.'

'No. There is no doubt. I must die. Nothing else will serve.'

'Yet it is hard: you are but two-and-twenty: you are rich: you are strong and handsome. It is hard to tear yourself away from all these things.'

'What are all these things without Sylvia?'

'True—true—and then—as you say yourself, nothing but your own death can restore her to health. Devil's work. One or other of you must die—Devil's work. Devil's work. And it is by her own command, is it not? There is one other way, however. Suppose that you could be made to regard this girl with as much hatred and disgust as she now entertains for you——?'

'That is impossible.'

'Is it? Look at me—in my face—eyes to eyes—so.'

Thereupon—I do not vouch for the truth of this incredible part of my narrative; it is

as George tells it; I say nothing for it or against it; George declares it was doubtless the excessive sorrow and trouble in his brain that made him giddy and visionary—he felt as if he was transported to some lonely spot where he, that is, his mind, because he was out of the body, was attacked or besieged by a crowd of devils; they filled him with new and evil thoughts; they whispered wicked things; made horrible suggestions, such as before this he had never dreamed or heard of; they came about him in thousands, fighting, pushing, struggling to get inside him and take possession of him. They showed him new and terrible kinds of wickedness such as he himself would never have devised; these they clad in lovely forms, and so made them attractive, and hid their wickedness. Then they showed him his own mistress—Sylvia herself—lovely still, but debased and disgraced to the lowest level, singing horrible songs in a tavern with men of the lowest and the basest; herself shameless and reckless. Then they showed him other things beautiful and desirable, and sang soft songs to him.

He knew, he says, that they were trying by some way to take possession of him. But they could not. Why? Because he still kept his thought fixed on his mistress, pure and holy. I would fain think that if this thing were really done, the efficacy of the defence depended on the holiness of the image, no mere woman, surely, being able to keep off these devils. The whispers came faster and more furious: the images were threatening: the figures were terrible: but he held fast. The things were to him no more than the vile orgies he had witnessed from a boy upwards in Ratcliffe and Shadwell among the sailors, the crimps, and the nymphs who adorn this quarter.

At last the devils retreated—beaten and baffled.

How long this conflict lasted, he knows not. After a while, when it closed, he found himself sitting in his chair, this new friend looking at him curiously. The memory of the thing had left him, and he knew not, until long afterwards, what had happened.

'My friend,' said Archer, gently, and as if

he was but carrying on his uninterrupted discussion, 'since, as you justly say, it is not possible for you to treat this young lady in the same manner as she has treated you, there is nothing more to be said. I will dissuade you no longer.' Yet he had said nothing at all to dissuade him, but had rather led him on. 'You must die, George—you must kill yourself.'

'Yes,' George replied, meekly—was there ever such madness?—'I must kill myself; and the only question is, How? Yet what the devil does it matter how, so only that I am dead and thrust into a hole in the ground?'

'It matters a great deal, I assure you. For, first of all, you should die, if possible, in such a way that no one would ever cast your death in Sylvia's teeth—that no one could say that you died because she was cruel. You must consider her in this matter.' Was not this thoughtful of him?

'Why, I suppose so; one would not have the poor girl charged with causing my death. That must be avoided, whatever we do. I

am a fool. I ought to have thought of her first of all.'

'Quite so. Then your death might take the form of an accident, or it might be caused by some one else.'

'Take a pistol, then, and shoot me,' said George. 'That can be done in a moment.'

'And be hanged therefor! Not so, my friend. Who is to prove that the thing is an accident?'

'How, then?'

'Let us deliberate.' He took a chair and sat down, crossing his legs and placing the tops of his fingers together. In such an attitude did Socrates discuss his knotty points. 'Let us deliberate upon this. Well, life is a thing easily stopped—as easily as one may stop a clock. Those who live to ninety think that life is tough and tenacious. It only seems tenacious. There have been benevolently provided by Nature a thousand ways by which life can be stamped out of man. There are so many that, for my own part, I am surprised that men should ever continue to live when misery falls upon them. For

instance, to consider a few of the simpler ways, a man may buy a bottle of brandy with his last crown, and, sitting in his own room, he may drink it at a draught, like a tankard of ale. Then will he fall back dead, and so be presently found, and no one to say how he died. The verdict of the coroner's jury will be "Death by the Visitation of God."'

'No,' said George, 'I will not stagger drunk into the presence of my Judge.'

'Again, with twopence, a man may buy a length of rope and hang himself. Verdict of the coroner's jury—"Suicide."'

'No, I desire not to be buried where four roads meet, and a stake driven through my body. I will be buried like a Christian man, with the Service of the Church; not like a dog.'

'Oh! there are many other ways. You might buy, as I said before, a bottle of poison. My friend the apothecary on Tower Hill, a poor man, though deserving, as I have already said, will gladly help any friend of mine out of the world in return for a guinea. And,

since he is so poor, you would die in the very act of a charitable deed, and so go straight to Heaven. As for the poison, there are so many that you have a wide choice. Nature is lavish in her poisons. Why, it seems as if self-killing were intended by Providence, so many are the deadly poisons. Some there are which gently send a man to sleep: his eyes slowly drop: his head falls back: his breathing is soft and regular at first: he sees the most delightful visions. You, my friend, would dream that Sylvia was all your own: in a most heavenly rapture you would breathe your last. This is a secret and a very choice poison. Keep it—keep it—for your own consumption and for your friends. I will ask my apothecary to treat you as he would himself. If you desire a poison that you shall feel—if your conscience pricks you so that you would fain feel atoning pangs as a set-off against the imaginary sin of suicide, there is a kind he would find for you, suitable for the purpose. It bends the backbone into an arch, it twists the legs into shape like a corkscrew, it pulls the face away into such

distortions that your own mother would not know you, and its agonies are such that the sufferer cannot even shriek. Would that suit you? Or again, if you desire despatch without time for reflection, repentance, or change of mind, there is a kind which kills like a pistol-shot through your heart. You have only to smell—so—one whiff of this divine essence, and—*presto*!—you are safe in Heaven, out of reach of all troubles—or else——'

'No,' said George, shuddering. 'I will have none of your poisons. I want no outlandish way of death.'

'You are hard to please. Will you take a knife and cut your throat?'

'And bleed to death like a pig? Never.'

'Will you take a pistol, and blow out your brains?'

'What? To have my brains scattered about over the floor. Ugh! Filthy! Find me a better way than that.'

'You can jump into the water, and be drowned, come now. There is a clean and an easy way.'

'Man—I can swim like a fish.'

'You might tie a stone to your feet—I can find such a kind of stone in the Flemish burying-ground, off Hangman's Gains—and then jump in.'

'No. I once drowned a dog that way. And he ran round and round at the bottom of the water before he died. Turned me sick to see the poor creature die.'

'It is impossible to please you,' said Archer. 'Yet you are resolved to die.'

'If I shoot or hang myself, my father will be grieved. Sylvia, herself, though she might recover, would be unhappy for thinking she had caused my death. If I were drowned nobody would know, and so nobody would be any the better.'

'You should tell me beforehand.'

George shook his head.

'It will not do,' he said, 'I must die, indeed, but not by my own hand; not even though it should seem accidental; not in any way which would let it be possible that Sylvia, or anybody, shall be reproached with being the cause of my death.'

'Then, my dear friend,' said Archer, 'there is another way, it is a certain way, and one that I can confidently recommend.'

He drew a chair, and sat down. And they talked together with great earnestness, and low voices. You shall learn, presently, what fine things came of this talk.

CHAPTER VI

THE PRESS-GANG

Everybody remembers the succession of events in these years. They proved the safety of the British Constitution if they did no more. There was very little more playing with revolutionary principles when the King and Queen of France were murdered, and when the Reign of Terror showed us to what crimes a Revolution may lead a nation. Indeed we revolutionaries destroyed ourselves. We called upon our countrymen to imitate the example of France. Great Heaven! What an example was held up to us! We, to be sure, executed King Charles the First. But he was treated, at least, with the respect due to a fallen gentleman. What respect did the French accord to their unfortunate King and Queen?

Well—it matters not now. No use in talking more about it. War was declared. That was in February. You would think that war or peace mattered little to us living retired in the Precinct of St. Katherine's. But, consider. We were on the riverside. From the beginning of the war to the end of it there were lively times all along the riverside. The press-gang was never idle; and what with that institution, without which, it seems, the navy cannot be manned, and with prize money, the paying off ships, the frolics of the sailors ashore, their prodigality and recklessness, their fights and quarrels and loves, during the whole of that long war the banks of the Thames were never for a single hour at peace. All was frolic, fighting, drink, inging, quarrelling, and dancing. 'Twas like Bartholomew Fair, or, rather, Horn Fair all the year round!

On Sunday evening I met George coming out of Richard Archer's house. It was late, but I knew his step, and called to him across the Close.

He caught my arm and held me hard,

without speaking for a while. He was reeling about, too, as if he was in liquor, and his voice was thick.

'George,' I said, 'you have been drinking.'

'No, no—I have drunk nothing. Wait a moment. Let me—let me pull myself together.'

In two or three minutes he loosed his hold of my arm, and stood beside me. His eyes were wild, and his face was pale in the moonlight; and his limbs still shook.

'What is the matter, George? Why are you shaking and trembling?'

'It is nothing. I am often so when I come away from my friend Dick Archer. It is the night air.'

'What have you to do with Archer? Why do you go to his house?'

'He is the best friend I have. He advises me. In unknown waters any port is welcome.'

'Can he advise you better than your old friends, George?'

'Sometimes a man wants counsel, which his old friends will not give him; sometimes

he intends a thing which they would not approve; sometimes he means to do a thing to which they could never consent. That, old friend, is why I seek counsel of Dick Archer. He is quick to see what is best, and he is not afraid to advise it.'

'Then, George, what is best?'

He took me by the arm, and we walked along, leaving the Close behind us, towards St. Katherine's Square.

'Nevill, my lad,' he said, 'when the ship was homeward bound, with such a splendid passage as never happened, I believe, to any ship afloat, I was the happiest man alive. Why? Because I was going to see my girl again. Why, there may have been others in the ship's company going to see their girls—but they were not going to see Sylvia. No—no; the best girl in the world was made for me—sinner that I am—the very best woman, the sweetest, the most tender ever made was made for me. Should I be so ungrateful as not to be happy? Well, Nevill—I came home. You know what happened.'

'Alas! I know too well.'

'I have had my happiness, you see. Every man in his lifetime has so much happiness dealt out for him. Some have it spread over seventy years—spread thin like the poor man's dripping. Some have it in a lump. I had mine in a lump. It is all over. You can't eat your cake and have it. You can't be so selfish as to ask for more when you have eaten up your ration. No—no'—he shook his head wisely—'mine is gone—eaten up—devoured—no more for me. Then, d'ye see, I'm in the way. If I was to leave you all and go away—then Sylvia would get better; if I was to die, so that I could never come back again, the poor child would get quite well, and would dance and laugh again.'

'If you were to die?' I asked, perceiving with a sinking heart that he was now well-nigh off his head. Only a madman would pursue such a thought or entertain such a fancy.

'Sylvia told me so herself. Oh! I forced the truth from her. She said. "Die, and trouble me no more."'

'Nay, George. That will I never believe.'

'It is true, I say. "Die," she said, "and trouble me no more." Wherefore, no more words, dear lad. I am going to die.'

'George, this is stark madness. Great Heavens! Are we all bewitched?'

'No; it is sober truth. Don't think I want to die. No joys of Heaven,' he added, blasphemously, 'could equal the joy of lovely Sylvia. Since that is done, I must go.'

'But, George, this is worse than madness. It is a most wicked and impious thing even to think of taking your own life.'

'I thought so once. We were all taught so. The world must be taught this, otherwise no man would consent to live when trouble fell upon him. Dick Archer, however, knows better. He is a mighty clever man, Nevill. He knows more than all the parsons.'

I knew better than anybody else how clever a man he was—and I could make no reply; for, of course, I could not tell what part the man had played in bringing George to this resolution; nor could I believe that, for any purposes of his own, he had wickedly encouraged him.

'All is settled in my own mind,' he went on. 'I shall die content, because it is the will of the Lord. He calls me. That is now quite clear to me. He has given me a brimming measure of happiness, and now He says that I must get out of the way and make room for others; so that this girl who is too good for me shall be restored to health and be given to another man. What am I, Nevill, that I should get such a girl as Sylvia? A common coarse tarpaulin. A mere sailor. I know nothing. I cannot dress. I cannot dance. I cannot even talk the language which girls like to hear. It is best for me to go.'

I could scarce refrain from weeping to see him thus resolute and thus reduced to despair. Never had I heard him talk in this way before. Well, I began to reason with him. We walked to and fro on the flags of the Square for an hour or more, while I used every argument that I could think of. But I could plainly perceive that I might as well argue with a stone or a log for any effect that I could produce. He was immovable. There was but one thing for him to do.

'If it were not for my friends,' he said, 'I would this moment shoot myself. But this would bring shame upon those who love me. They must not hide their heads over one who has killed himself.'

See the method of his madness. He would kill himself, and yet he would not wish to be thought a self-murderer.

'Neither my father nor my aunt would approve of such a course,' he added; 'let them, therefore, think that my death was due to natural causes, or to accident, or to the result of rash conduct; but not to my own deliberate design. Dick Archer knows this, and you, dear lad. But let no one else know. Above all, let not Sylvia even so much as suspect the truth. All my arrangements are now made. I have written out a will, and signed it, being now in my right mind——'

'You in your right mind? Oh! George. You are stark, staring mad.'

'I will tell you what I have done with my Dock-money. I have signed a paper which gives it to Dick Archer; first, because he is very unfortunate in being so poor, and yet so

able; next, because he has been my special friend in this matter: and thirdly, because I cannot give it to Sylvia, as I should otherwise wish. If she had my Dock she would always be thinking of him who gave it. So I have bestowed all my wealth upon Dick Archer.'

I waited to hear more. To Richard Archer?

'And we have agreed what to do. Well, it seems safe; and no one will suspect. I tell you my lad, because we have never had any secrets from each other, and I should like you to understand exactly——.'

'George—George,' I cried, 'this must not be.'

Now at that moment there arose from St. Katherine's Stairs, hard by, a great and sudden shouting, yelling, and trampling, as of men fighting. We knew very well what this meant. 'The press!' cried George, a sailor once more.

The steps drew nearer. Then the whole of the combatants poured tumultuously into the Square, which offered a fine arena for a moonlit fight.

For the most part, the men who are pressed make little or no resistance, but march off under their captors without further admonition than the shaking of the clubs. To-night, however, the men, perhaps pot-valiant, had got clubs of their own, and they were making a fight of it. The press-gang consisted of a dozen men. In the Precinct we are well accustomed to the common sailor. When ashore he is rude and rough; but, unless in liquor, he is peaceful and harmless—far more peaceful than the mudlarks and bargemen of the river-bank. He sits at home contentedly, and knits with the women: he makes and mends his slops: he washes the floors: he digs in the garden: he smokes his short pipe of tobacco: he cooks the dinner. But these fellows were the King's fighting-men. Such as I saw rushing into the Square shouting, flourishing their bludgeons, were those who filled the boats in a cutting-out expedition: those who boarded the enemy's deck: those who won our glorious victories. Big and brawny fellows they were, their chins bristling with a week's growth; their hair, long and

ragged, hanging over their foreheads and down their necks. Dressed in their short jackets convenient for fighting, their round hats stuck on the back of the head, they rushed forward, shoulder to shoulder, brandishing their bludgeons with horrid execrations. A lieutenant with a drawn cutlass commanded them, but stood apart from the fray.

The men they wanted to press were twenty or thirty fellows, just come ashore after a long voyage: peaceful men, for the most part: some of them come home to their wives and children: some simple fishermen in their brown petticoats: some anxious only for a drinking bout till the money ran out. 'Twas hard, after two years, perhaps, afloat, to be pressed on the very landing. Some of them had got clubs, too, and despair lent them courage. But they wanted discipline and a leader. The event was not doubtful: the merchant-men were losing heart.

'Surrender!' cried the lieutenant. 'Surrender! or it shall be the worse for you!'

Not one man surrendered. But one fell,

and they fought like the heroes of old Homer over his prostrate body. Round the combatants hovered a crowd of women and boys, who cried and cheered.

We were standing in the porch of a house. Partly sheltered by its pillars, we could survey the combat.

Suddenly, without a word, George broke from this retreat, and rushed into the midst of the fight.

Strong and valiant as the press-gang were, there was not one among them so strong and so brave as this mate of the East Indiaman. He snatched a club from one of the men—one who hung on in the rear, and seemed to have small stomach for the knocks.

I have never seen a fight either on land or sea, but in this miniature battle I saw the strength and valour of one man work wonders. He was everywhere; he sprang like a tiger upon his prey; his club fell on the men's heads and laid them senseless; he fought with fist as well as with club; by his own weight he bore them down. The lieutenant rushed upon him with upraised cutlass to cut him down;

'He fought with fist as well as with club.'

the lieutenant's arm fell broken, and his cutlass dropped to the ground. Then the merchant-men regained their spirit; they rallied; they followed their heaven-sent leader: they drove the gang before them, fighting as they went—back to the Stairs where their boats were lying; the women and the boys ran after, laughing and shouting; and the battle was over. For once the press-gang were routed; they were forced to get into their boats, the lieutenant with a broken arm and the loss of his sword; they pushed off into the river, leaving the victors shouting on the Stairs.

George came back, breathed and heated.

'Are you hurt?' I asked.

'I believe I have not got a scratch.'

'George—you, the son of a King's Officer—you, lately the mate of a ship—you, a respectable dock-owner, to fight a press-gang!'

'Why,' he said, 'twas a sudden thought. If I fight and am beaten, I said to myself, I shall be pressed. Perhaps I shall be killed—a more cut-throat set of villains never led a press—so much the better. If I am not

killed, I thought, I shall be pressed. That settles the business. Once aboard a man-o'-war, then am I safe—away from Sylvia, and likely to be killed in action.' He sighed. 'T'would have saved a vast deal o' trouble. But it wasn't allowed. You'll own I did my best. They weren't allowed to hurt me. Why didn't one of their bludgeons lay me low? 'Twas not permitted, my lad.'

'That is a sign that you are not to die, George,' I said.

'No—no; it is a sign that I must die some other way—not that way. Well, we shall find a way. As for the men, what care I whether they serve King or Company, whether they fly the white or the red ensi'n?'

The ground was strewn with the bodies of the wounded, with broken bludgeons, torn clothes, hats, and other wrecks and relics of the fight. The women began to come back now and to look after the wounded men, some of whom lay senseless, but I never heard that any were killed. In a few minutes

all were carried or supported from the field, and the affair was over.

'George,' I said, as we walked away, 'if this is your mood, why not go to sea again in your old service? As likely as not you would be killed fighting a privateer,' thus thinking to humour him, and to turn his thoughts into a more healthy channel.

He shook his head in dejection.

'Well, then, go and be pressed. Put on sailors' slops and sit in a mug-house at Ratcliffe. There never was so hot a press. Or enter as a volunteer in the King's navy. Then if, as you suppose, the Lord intends your death, you will die like a brave man and a Briton. Think of that. Go to fight the French and leave the issue with the Lord.'

Well, we talked of that for a long time, and at last he agreed to think of this plan, which, I am still convinced, would have been the best for him and for everybody. Unhappily, he did not, as you shall see, get pressed.

CHAPTER VII

FIRE AND WATER

It is difficult to believe that the events which now followed were not miraculously guided and ordered. The man chiefly concerned thought that he had received a Divine command, and was only anxious to carry out that order faithfully as a good sailor should. He was firmly possessed with the opinion that it was his duty to die—he must seek death, somehow or other he would find it. The Lord had so ordered; his mistress had ordered him to die and give her no more trouble. He owned that he had enjoyed his day of happiness and was resigned; he did not question the justice of the sentence. Heard one ever tell of two lovers in such condition of mind?

You have seen how George rushed into a

desperate conflict with which he had no concern. He came out of it unhurt. A dozen men were knocked about and wounded —he got never a scratch. Any one in his sober senses would have concluded that the Lord had thus clearly shown that he was not to court death. Not so George. 'I am to die,' he said, 'but not this way.'

One more thing—if not two—happened which should also have turned him back into the path of common sense, but on the other hand only strengthened him the more in this his madness. On this head I have been assured by a learned physician that when a man is mad everything which in the minds of reasonable people should make his folly manifest to him, does, on the contrary, only confirm him in his madness; and this, though he should even—such things have happened —fancy himself the Omnipotent, or believe that, like Neptune, he rules the waves, and, like Jupiter, can command the wind and rain.

We left the scene of the battle, holding such discourse as I have indicated, and not greatly heeding whither we went. Our steps

led us out of the narrow labyrinth of St. Katherine's Precinct to the broad and ample space on Tower Hill, a spot which, whether for plenty and wholesomeness of air, or the view of the venerable Castle or the terrace walk along the river, or for the commodious houses which stand around it, or for the thoughts of the great events which have taken place in this spot, doth always seem to me the most desirable place of residence in or around London. To-night the moon shone upon the walls and towers of the great Castle, London's fortress, the former stronghold and palace of the Kings—the Tower by moonlight makes a noble picture. It is not, however, a place where one should choose to walk unarmed by night or alone, considering the character of some of the streets which lie adjacent. These are filled with villains of all kinds—land-robbers and river-robbers, footpads, highway-men, pickpockets, and the like. Within the borders of the City they are not tolerated; the narrow area of each parish makes it easy to preserve the virtue of householders, tenants, and lodgers. When one has such a com-

panion, however, as George, still carrying the bludgeon with which he had fought and conquered, one need fear neither footpad nor robber of any kind.

As we walked discoursing and arguing beside the moat I chanced to look up, and perceived by a red glow in the sky that there was somewhere a fire. Everybody in London knows that red glow. This grew rapidly brighter and more ruddy; it appeared as if tongues of flame were playing in the heavens, answering to the flames below. It is terrible to gaze upon the reflection and to think of the perils those run who live in the crowded lanes and courts of the City. Heavens! what a sky must that have been—what a rolling of flame and quick darting of fiery tongues—when the Great Fire burned up three-quarters of the City!

This fire seemed near; I thought I could hear the roaring of the flames. I stopped talking, because it was nothing but the repetition of arguments which now fell idly on the ear of a man who was as obstinate as a pig

in his conviction. I touched his arm and pointed.

'It is so near,' I said, 'that it must be in one of the City streets.'

George raised his head carelessly at first. Then he became suddenly alert—the sight of a fire always excites those who look on. Then exactly as he had done at the fight, he broke from me and ran as hard as he could run across the hill and in the direction of the fire.

I knew instantly what was in his mind. For that matter he had himself revealed his mind to me. The same thought which had driven him into the thick of the fight drove him now to the fire. Perhaps the Lord wished that he should perish in the flames. If so, he would obey the will of the Lord. Therefore he ran, resolved to try his fate.

I ran after him, not with the view of dissuading him, a thing which a thousand men would not have done, but to watch the event.

The fire had broken out in a house of Crutched Friars; one standing nearly opposite the square stone pillars of the old Navy Office;

that is, the second Navy Office, for the first was in Mark Lane close by. The house was one of the old houses of which there still are a great many left in the City, with projecting upper stories, casement-windows, and gables with timbered front. On the ground-floor an oilman and chandler had his shop, and here, no doubt, was stored a quantity of oil, spermaceti, tallow-candles, and other combustible things. The only way from this room upstairs into the street was through the shop. The fire, which began in the shop, I know not how, spread rapidly, by reason of these materials, and had now burst through the ceiling of the ground-floor, and was raging in the room above. When we arrived the street—Crutched Friars is narrow—was crowded with a vast concourse of people, always ready to run after a fire; they filled the street from end to end. Seething Lane, which is nearly opposite, was also crowded, and at every window were the faces of those who eagerly watched the progress of the flames. The street, lit up by the fire, was as light as by day. One or two of the fire-engines had

already arrived—those of the Sun and the Phœnix Insurance Companies—and were rapidly preparing their hose, the firemen in the uniform of their company, and wearing leathern helmets. They cleared the ground before the house; they called for volunteers to hand a line of leathern buckets, and they turned on the water in long jets through the hose upon the flames, but with little effect. The shop was already a burning, fiery furnace; the flames were roaring out of the first-floor windows; the house was past all hope of safety. Where were the occupants? Had they been saved? No one knew. Nor do I know whether any perished in the flames. Oh, horrible! While it was apparent that in a very few minutes the whole house would be in flames, and while the fire below was so hot that no ladder could be planted against the wall but would be instantly consumed, a woman appeared at the upper window. She was apparently in her night-dress and night-cap, as if she had been awakened out of her first sleep; she had an infant in her arms, and we could see the face of an older child

beside her. She threw open the casement and shrieked for help. Were we to look on idly while this hapless woman perished in the flames? Then, in the crowd below, some cried and shouted I know not what; some laughed, not from mirth, but from madness; some cried out to her that to jump was her only chance; others remembered that the part of the window which opened was too small, and yelled to her to break down the rest of the window—as if a woman without a weapon of any kind could, in the few moments which remained to her, tear down the leaden window-frame. Then, some called for ladders; and some rushed about looking for ladders, as if they grew in every gutter; some called for blankets to catch the children; some wrung their hands; some wept aloud; some prayed; some turned and talked they knew not what to those who stood beside them.

Some men came running with a long ladder. It was quickly raised and reached the window-sill, but so great was the heat of the fire below that it seemed as if the ladder must be instantly consumed. The hose was

thereupon turned into the window and for a little space the flames seemed beaten down. Then a man rushed out from the crowd, and snatching a leathern helmet from the head of a fireman and an axe from the engine, he rushed up the ladder. It was not one of the firemen, as was evident to us from his dress; he wore the garb of a simple citizen. He ran up the ladder with the rapidity of a sailor; he hacked and cut the window-frame, so that in a moment he had broken away enough to make room for egress; he snatched the elder child and slid down the ladder as quick as lightning. Heavens! It was none other than George himself. It was surely tempting Providence. He was courting Death.

The crowd roared and cheered when he ran down the ladder—none but a sailor could run up and down a ladder so quickly—they roared and cheered again when a second time he mounted. And then they suddenly became silent. The silence of expectancy and terror fell upon them. For the woman with her baby was no longer at the window, and the man had leaped within. Not a voice was

lifted; you could hear the gasping of the breath of the multitude while it gazed upon the window and waited: you could hear them, I say, catching their breath even above the roaring of the flames; they held each other by the hand; their faces turned white, but yet looked ruddy by the red light of the flames. These leaped and roared like lions hungering and roaring for their prey; the water hissed: the pumping of the engines beat like drums; and yet I say that you could hear above all the gasping of the crowd.

I know not how long this suspense lasted; at the most it could not have been more than a minute or so, otherwise the very roof would have been on fire. At last the man reappeared; his leathern helmet had fallen off; he was bare-headed; over his left shoulder he had thrown the woman; she was apparently in a swoon or fit, and seemed not to move. He had wrapped her in a blanket. In his right hand he bore the baby, also wrapped in a blanket. Oh! What a roar was that which burst from all our lips! He

looked down quietly as if there was plenty of time, and stepped upon the ladder. Then the flames, as if disappointed of their prey, burst forth from the window below, and wrapped and lapped them all, so that the mere hot-breath should have killed them. But the next moment he was at the bottom with his burden. And the ladder itself, consumed with the heat, fell forward flaming and broken. And then a shout louder even than the first or the second sprang from every throat.

The woman, taken out of the blanket, was found still senseless but unhurt. The baby unrolled lay unharmed in its pretty white night-gown. They escaped without a scratch or a burn. And presently some good Samaritan stepped forth and ordered woman and children to be carried to his own house, where, I heard afterwards, the woman recovered, and was none the worse—but, one hopes, grateful to her deliverer, whose name she never knew. As for George himself, he had cut his fingers a little with the glass ; there were some scorchings or blisters on the back of his hands, and

that was all. As for his head, though the helmet had fallen off and was lost, that must have been protected in some way by the blankets, because his hair was not even singed, nor were his eyes the worse. It was wonderful that any man could have passed through such a breath of the raging, fiery furnace without injuries.

When he had laid down his burden, and left the woman and children in the hands of the firemen, he received his hat, which some one had held for him, put it on, and turned away.

'Come,' said one of the firemen, 'since you've done what none of us ventured to do, stay a while just for the good woman to say a thank ye for her life.'

But he walked away without reply. When he pushed through the crowd no one recognised the man whom they had cheered with all their voice a minute before. That mattered nothing. He wanted no cheers; just as well that he should not be known; the act remained; the people would not forget how this man ran up the ladder surrounded by

flames, ventured into the raging fire, and brought the children and their mother out of the very furnace itself—out of the jaws of Hell. I say, the act remained, though the man who did it is unknown; he has become an example and a memory to those who saw it; brave deeds are the parents of deeds as brave, just as heroic sires descend from heroic sires.

He came forth from the crowd with hanging head. He had tried again, and failed. He walked like a schoolboy who is ashamed. As for pride at having done the bravest thing in the world—many a hero on the battle-field is a coward when the house is on fire—he showed no pride, or consciousness of any merit whatever. Perhaps, when one considers the reason why he did the thing, there was little cause for surprise.

'I witnessed the act, George,' I said, joining him.

'Ay—ay——'

''Twas a noble deed.'

''Tis what you like, lad.'

'A noble deed—a brave deed. Not

another man in all the crowd could have done that.'

'I was forced to do it. I had no choice. There was no help for it.'

'So you say.'

'Why, lad, what do you think I did it for? Did I know whose house was on fire? Did I know anything of the woman and her brats?'

'Well, that matters not a straw. You saved their lives.'

'I tell you I was driven to go up that ladder. Someone said, "Go into the midst of the flames, and they shall not harm you. Ay, into the heart of the raging fire." Why, when I got in at the window, the floor was already burning like paper, and the joists were cracking. The woman's frock was on fire, and the baby's clothes. In another minute they would have been killed. In her extremity of terror she had fainted. The *flames stopped*, Nevill, for me to do the job. The fire was stayed so that I should not be burned. When I came down the ladder, it was through such a flame as no one before

ever passed through, I believe, and came out alive.'

'You passed through unhurt, partly because you slid down the ladder as only a sailor can, and partly by the help of God.'

'Ay, there it is; by the help of God. And this is another intimation I have received. First, I am told that I must die; then, that I shall not die by battle; next, that I shall not die by fire.'

'Well, George, since you cannot shake off this disorder in any other way, get you gone to sea again. There you will come into your right mind, and Sylvia, poor child, will return to hers.'

He laughed gently.

'No, lad,' he said; 'it is no disorder of the mind. It is not as you think. My mind, thank God, is clear and sound. Since I am shut out from my girl, and there is no hope for me, I am shut out from life. She is my life: without her there is no life. "Die," she told me—"die, and trouble me no more."'

What to say? Truly, I had no more to

say. You cannot reason with a man who has a bee in his bonnet.

As for what happened next day, I would willingly pass it over and say nothing about it, but for the importance which George himself attached to the thing. To me it means nothing. His escape from the battle was due to the extraordinary skill with which he handled his bludgeon; his escape from the fire was due to his wonderful courage and the rapidity with which he got up and down the ladder. I say this without seeking to diminish the part borne in all human undertakings by the help of Providence; but, speaking of human agencies, such I conceive were the reasons why he escaped; and I declare that I can hear no such voice or message as George declared was speaking to him in these events. And as to this other thing, if George had been unable to swim, or if he had not been as much at home in the water and as easy in it as a mermaid, if there are such creatures, I would attach importance to it. Everybody who knows George, knows very well that from his childhood he has been one

of them—they are rare indeed—who seem unable to sink in the water. As a boy in summer he would willingly swim about all day below the Pool, diving under the barges, leaping into the water from boats, climbing up the sides of the ships by the ropes, and leaping from them. Three times already had he saved the lives of drowning men; he had no fear of water; he thought no more of such a rescue than many would think of catching a man who stumbles. At this juncture, however, the thing which he did the very next day seemed to bring a message to him. It was this—I say again, that to my mind it has no significance. In the morning he took boat for his Dock, which is beyond the point opposite Limekiln Hole. Here he chiefly spent his day, moodily leaning over the wall, and looking up and down the river, or sitting in his office doing nothing. In these days he did nothing. I suppose the business of the Dock was carried on by some one, but indeed I know not; perhaps there was a foreman; one would think that the people employed at the Dock—the rope-makers, boat-

builders, caulkers, mast-makers, carpenters, painters, and the rest would want their wages; and that the owners and captain of the ship in Dock would want a master for conference. Certainly, George did nothing. And so, as I said above, I know not how the business was carried on.

Now, when the boat was pretty far down the Reach, and near the Point, by some accident—I cannot say how, because I was not there—it was run into and capsized, or foundered. It matters not how it happened; but in a moment the two watermen and George were all floundering in the water together, and carried headlong downwards by the force of the tide, then strongly ebbing. The watermen could not swim a single stroke—such men never can swim, though their lives are spent upon the water, and, I suppose, in their rough way—they mostly appear insensible to the thought of death or danger—they gave themselves up for lost. George, however, brought them both ashore. He did for them a thing which I have often seen him do when a boy: he swam after them, and got them

together. Then, because they struggled, and would catch at his neck and arms, he cuffed and banged them with his fists as easily as if he was upon dry land. When he had reduced them somewhat to obedience he placed a hand under the head of each man, and so, swimming upon his back, he made for the bank just where the first of the gibbets stands, and landed in the Isle of Dogs.

He told me afterwards what had happened.

'It is another sign,' I said, 'that the Lord will have you live and not die.'

'Nay,' he replied, stubborn in his madness. 'It is another intimation of the Lord's will; any other man would have been drowned by two such lubbers trying to catch me round the neck. I should have been drowned—or near it—at any other time. But not that way. I must not die that way. Why, man, I felt as if it were a hand beneath me holding me up; I was as light as a cork; I was half out of the water even with the weight of those two watermen dragging me down. To swim ashore carrying

them with me was child's play. Make what you please out of that, Nevill. For me I make but one thing certain. It is what I have told you. Now have I tried fire, battle, and water. What shall I try next?'

'Go to sea,' I told him. 'There you may make trial of cannon-shot, musket-ball, grape-shot, chain-shot, flying splinters, boarding-pikes, cutlasses, exploding-powder, not to speak of shipwrecks, hidden rocks, tempests, starvation on desert islands, cannibals and savages. Go to sea, George, and humbly wait for what may happen.'

CHAPTER VIII

AT LAST

By this time Mrs. Archer who came into the Precinct, as you have heard, a young woman with a baby, so poor that she was fain to wash for any who would give her work, and that of the roughest kind, had risen to a great reputation in St. Katherine's, not only on account of fine and dexterous work, but also for her quiet and sober behaviour and her proved virtue. Among the poorer people she made no friends, nor would she even suffer her son to consort with the riverside lads; she kept him, perhaps, foolishly above his station; she attended Divine Service regularly at the church on Sundays and Holy Days; her manners were good; she was respectful to the ladies who employed her, and did not presume beyond her position. She seemed to want no

friends; she was a silent woman. As for her appearance, she was at this time a woman between forty and fifty; a woman with some of her comeliness left—it was said that when she first came to the place she was beautiful; she was always sorrowful to look at. 'She is one of those,' said the Wise Woman, 'who were born to sorrow. She has had many troubles, and she will have more.'

I do not know how she and her fiery, passionate son agreed together. Perhaps, as he knew how to govern himself orderly and respectfully before his betters, so he was able to govern himself in the presence of his mother. I never heard but that his behaviour towards her was such as a son should be. Richard Archer was indeed a great villain, but we need not add more sins to his record than he actually committed. All I have to say about them is, that here were mother and son strangely unlike each other; as much unlike as can be; the one patient, silent, content; the other fiery, raging, and impatient.

Twenty-two years had passed since first she came to this place. She made, as I have said,

no friends; but, once a month, a woman came to see her and remained shut up with her for an hour or two. Then she went away. Before the day came round, Mrs. Archer would seem to grow anxious and uneasy; for a day or two afterwards she was restless. Then she dropped back into the old tranquillity, and continued her work, and possessed her soul in patience.

One day—about this time—the woman came on her appointed day. 'Twas in the afternoon; and the woman was dressed in a high straight bonnet, her ringlets hanging down behind, her long neckerchief so arranged as to make her look like a pouter-pigeon. To look at her you would say, at first sight, that she was the wife of a flourishing City shopkeeper; and, at second sight, that she was a City gossip.

'Well, Cousin Lucy,' she said, sitting down and nodding her head, 'it's come at last.'

'What has come?'

'I took tea with my lord's housekeeper yesterday afternoon, and heard about it.'

'What has happened? Cousin Sarah. He is not dead?'

'No—no—not yet. Long expected—long

deferred. The sinner has often a long rope, but he is pulled up at last. As for rope, his lordship has little to complain of in that respect. Sixty, if a day, and the young man still to the very end.'

'What has happened? Quick!'

'A stroke, cousin. That's all. He had a stroke the day before yesterday.'

'A stroke?'

'Both legs gone. They say he will never move his legs again. There's some wickedness stopped, which will be good for his immortal soul; though, as I said to John, this morning, while he still has his hands and his head, and his tongue, he can always add to his iniquities.'

'Will he die? How does he bear it?'

'Why, a man with a stroke or a palsy may go on for years. My own father's uncle lived for five years with both feet in the grave. His lordship may do the same. As for his bearing it, how should such a man bear it? Like a raging, roaring lion in the Tower of London with the toothache. That's how he bears it, my dear. Knowing the man, cousin, you must know how he would bear any

chastising. We have two ways, my dear, of receiving the rod. Some of us confess that we deserve it ; others, alas ! blaspheme and curse.'

'Yes,' said Mrs. Archer ; 'and some wonder why they have so much of it. I've been wondering all my life why I am always under the rod.'

'Well, cousin, you must own that you were imprudent.'

'I believed a man. I married a man. That was all my offence.'

'Without your parents' consent, my dear.'

'A thing done every day when the 'prentice carries off his master's daughter. Well, it matters not much. He has had a stroke. So—he can't do much harm now, Cousin Sarah.' She lifted her head with a little colour in her pale cheek and an unwonted gleam in her eyes. 'My time will come perhaps, and the time for my boy.'

'Your time, cousin? Alas ! what can you do? To be sure, he may soften under affliction, and remember the wrong he did. But I don't know. 'Tis a hard and unrepentant nature.'

'Yet he may soften.'

'I know not what you mean, Cousin Lucy. Now, isn't it a beautiful thing to think that there's the same punishment for the great and the lowly? It won't help him any more that he's a noble lord. Oh! no. He will be no better treated than one of your poor scuffle-hunters where he is going to. And to think that his punishment hasn't actually begun yet. This is only the ringing of the bell, as they say.' She nodded her head with complacency, thinking over the sufferings of a lost soul. Many women of outward piety love to dwell upon this dreadful theme. 'Not yet begun,' she added. 'Hundreds of years hence it will be hardly begun. In thousands and millions of years hence it will be only just begun, and all the time growing worse. Ah! they say that the souls in torment feel it more and more every day. Think of that! Think of that, Cousin Lucy, and take comfort.'

'Oh!' Mrs. Archer shuddered. 'Pray God he may repent.'

'Not he! The heart of such is like the

nether millstone. He is too proud for repentance. There is no grace left in him. None. Repent? He will blaspheme while there's life left in him, and after life he will blaspheme still.'

'At last!' said Mrs. Archer, 'I knew that something terrible was sure to happen to him, but I knew not what. The judgments are sometimes slow, but they are sure.'

'Well, Cousin Lucy, if you think that anything may be done for you and Dick, I wouldn't put it off. Because we know not what a day may bring forth. Try to make him provide for his son before he dies. Be humble with him, not reproaching or complaining. Fall down on your knees to him—villain that he is! Remember that he is a great man, though such a wretch, and rich and powerful, though a ravening wild beast, and you are a helpless woman. Don't reproach him. Be humble, cousin.'

'No. I shall not fall on my knees before him. If any one weeps it shall be my lord, not the woman he deceived.'

'Nay, my dear, you must not be too hard.

Think! Though he married you under false pretences, the boy is his own son; and he can still, if he dies not just yet, do so much for him. Why, he might send him to College or make a Bishop of him, or get him made an officer in the army, perhaps a member of Parliament, or a post of a thousand a year. You would like your son to be a gentleman, would you not? And, cousin,' the woman leaned forward and whispered, 'have you ever told him?'

'He knows that I have been deceived, and that his father is a great man.'

'What will you do, then?'

'I don't know yet. Cousin Sarah, will you find me a lawyer? I ought to have a lawyer. I want somebody to advise me—somebody I can trust. I have got a little money saved up. I don't want any help from my family, only the name of a respectable lawyer who will tell me what is best to be done.'

'Where is Richard?'

'In the school. He is uneasy of late. He is always restless and moody; like his father

he has fits of rage, but a good son to his mother.'

'You know your own affairs best, Cousin Lucy. I should think that a humble petition——'

'No, cousin.' Mrs. Archer sprang to her feet, with eyes suddenly flashing; 'I will not send a humble petition. I will demand my rights. I have been humble long enough.'

'Your rights? Poor dear, you have no rights. If a woman is deceived, the law will give her no rights.'

Mrs. Archer sat down and took up her work again. 'True,' she said, 'a woman who has been deceived has no rights. Did I ever show you my marriage lines?' She opened a drawer of her work-table and took out a paper. 'Here they are. If I lose them I can get another copy. The name of the bridegroom is put down as Stephen Archer, you see, and he is styled a master mariner. So he was. Stephen Archer, Lord Aldeburgh, Post Captain in His Majesty's service. And the bride is Lucy Raine. The paper look

all right, does it not? You would never think——'

'That he had a wife living at the time? Never! Villain!'

Mrs. Archer put back the paper in the drawer.

'The man who married us was the curate of the church, which was Allhallows the Great, near the Steelyard, where they have got the great carved screen across the middle of the church, and behind the altar Moses with a gold wand pointing to the Ten Commandments, and Aaron, in full dress, on the other side of the table. I remember very well. I have seen this clergyman often; he is only a curate still, because he has no learning or interest. But he is a good man, and would not, if he could prevent it, see me wronged.'

'What has the clergyman to do with it, Lucy?'

'More than you think, cousin. I say that he can swear to me; I mean, that I am the woman whom he married to Stephen Archer. And you, cousin, can swear the same.'

'Certainly I can.'

'And you can swear'—her pale cheek flushed—'that Richard is my son, baptized in the same church of Allhallows the Great.'

'There can be, I hope, no doubt of that.'

'Well, then, I am no disgrace to the family, unless it is a disgrace to have kept myself and my boy without help from any of the family. No disgrace, Cousin Sarah.'

She folded up her work neatly and laid it on the table; then she opened the drawer of the work-table again, and took out a miniature. It represented a young man, black-avised, as they say, dressed in the blue coat and white facings of the King's navy. On his breast was a star, his hair in the fashion of five-and-twenty years before—say about the year 1770, viz., frizzed high on the head like a negro's wool, powdered and queued behind.

'This,' she said, 'is a portrait of Richard's father. I took it from his sea-chest before I left him.'

The other woman looked at it curiously.

'It is like him still,' she said; 'the look of the devil was on him then—and it's on him now.'

'He was a tall and proper man, Cousin Sarah; no one ever had a more winning way than my husband. I shall call him my husband to my dying day, and he loved me, too—perhaps he loved a dozen other women; but so long as I knew it not, what matter? —until I discovered who he was and what his real position. His drunken valet let it out.'

'And then he told you that you were not truly married?'

'He flew into a rage; he horsewhipped his man till I verily thought he would have killed him outright; and then he turned to me, and told me that since I had discovered what he hoped would have remained concealed, I should learn more—much more than I expected or desired—namely, that when he married me, he had a wife still living; that I was no wife at all; and that if I had a baby—Dick was then unborn—he would be illegitimate, so that if I thought I was to be called my lady, and my brat my lord, I was mistaken. And with that, my dear, I put on my hat and came away here, as to a part of

London where I could live concealed from him.'

'Villain! Wretch and Villain!'

Mrs. Archer put back the miniature carefully.

'A strong man, Cousin Sarah, terrible, and without pity. A greater villain than even you suppose. Because you see, when he told me that his wife was living when he married me, he lied.'

'How, cousin? He lied?'

'He lied. He married me the day after his wife was buried. He walked straight from the funeral to the wedding. While she was dying, he was courting me. Captain Archer, of the merchant service, he called himself. He knew that she was dying when he asked me to marry him. Had I married him on the day fixed, she would have been living still, but I took a cold, and had to keep in bed, which put off the day.'

'Lucy! Are you sure?'

'I am quite sure and certain. I learned the truth five years ago. I learned it accidentally from an old volume of the "Annual

Register," where her death is recorded. I went to Westminster Abbey, where she lies buried. A noble monument has been erected to her memory. One angel weeps for her ladyship, while another bears her off to Heaven. The date of her death is written plain and clear. It was seven days before my marriage. All may read it.'

'Then you—you—Cousin Lucy—you!' the City madam gasped. 'If you are truly married to Lord Aldeburgh—you are her Ladyship! Here—in St. Katherine's Precinct—and you a dressmaker and sempstress! And your son the schoolmaster!'

'Truly, yes. I am Lady Aldeburgh. And he has known this all along. But I have known it for five years only. I have kept quiet because, cousin, he is capable of anything—murder—kidnapping—anything—and because he would, I am sure and certain, hate his son with such a hatred as only such a man is capable of feeling. Now that he is paralysed, Richard is safe. Yes, cousin—you may tell your husband, my Cousin John, that I have not disgraced the family. Keep the

secret to yourselves; and remember that my boy—my son Richard—the humble schoolmaster of St. Katherine's, does not know it yet, nor shall know it, till I have moved further in the matter. Keep my secret, cousin. Else all may fail. Keep my secret. Richard shall be his Lordship's successor, whatever he may say, or contrive, or invent.'

CHAPTER IX

THE AMENDMENT CARRIED

It cannot be denied that the Sublime Society of Snugs, together with all other associations having similar political purposes, was now under profound discouragement. I know not what happened to other revolutionary clubs, but for ourselves we had lost more than half our members, including those who drank the most, so that we were now coldly looked upon by the landlord, who as much as told us that, the reckoning being now contemptible, our room was desired rather than our company.

There had left us first of all those who were moderate: that is to say, those who did not object to the arguments of the philosophers, and very readily agreed over a pipe of tobacco and a cheerful glass that all men

were equal and have the same rights; but the assertion of this doctrine and its practical application are different things. They looked across the Channel, and they were terrified. We also lost all those who had money or trade to lose. For they, too, looked across the Channel. There they saw property confiscated, trade interrupted or destroyed, no respect paid to order, the course of law and justice stopped, shops robbed, private persons hindered in their business, no security as to stocks, shares, and joint enterprises, a whole nation mad for war, and the massacre of those who had hitherto kept down the mob. 'If these things,' they said, 'be the outcome of your precious principles, give us the ancient order—we will have no more of you.' Thereupon they all left the society, and the Snugs were now diminished by more than half.

Those who remained were chiefly those who are commonly described as having nothing to lose. They were young workmen of the better sort—watchmakers, shoemakers, and the like—skilled in their trade, greedy of reading and argument, but ignorant and

incapable of seeing more than one side of a question. To them a King was a Tyrant, a nobleman was a profligate Aristocrat. It must be owned that too many of our own nobility afforded by their conduct good ground for such a belief. A Bishop was bloated with wealth; a simple clergyman was a hypocrite; the Church, our Divine religion itself, was but a sham. There were also two or three who still believed in the righteousness of our cause, and looked to see the French nation settle down, after the first effervescence of their freedom, to the practice of the virtues—the austere virtues of antiquity—which their orators were never tired of preaching and extolling. One was the Templar, of whom I have already spoken; another was the Poet and Atheist, who had been expelled from the University of Oxford; there was the shabby author, and there was myself. These, with the company of those who had nothing to lose, now formed the Society of Snugs. Nothing to lose! Why these workmen and mechanics had their employers to lose! What doth it help a man

to have skill in his trade if he can find no employer? And if the employer was ruined, as was now daily happening in every town of France, what would the workman do? But of that, or of anything else sensible and sober, we thought nothing.

This, however, was my opportunity. When the moderate men left the Club I also ought to have gone. This I might have done without further discovery, and neither my father, nor any of the St. Katherine's Society, would ever have known how far I had gone in asserting the principles which they themselves abhorred. But I threw my chance away. I remained among these men, now doubly dangerous, and, therefore, I deserved all that I got afterwards. It is my one consolation that in the last of our meetings I did my best to keep the members within the bounds of reason.

We met, then, on what proved to be our last meeting, with every outward sign of deep dejection. The Marquis, who still came, yawned.

'My young friend,' he said, 'this no

longer interests me. I am not reminded any more of my own country. I see no chance that your Revolution will succeed. There are too many here'—he looked round with his supercilious smile—'too many here who smell of oil, and that not salad or olive oil. It is true that in Paris not to smell of oil or leather is dangerous—but here! *Enfin!* I think I shall come no longer.'

Our Chairman this evening was a man whom I remember very well. His trade or occupation I never knew, nor his dwelling-place; and I afterwards discovered that he had given us a false name. In religion he was a Socinian; he was all for freedom of thought and private judgment; he was ardent for the future of humanity; in appearance and manners he was greatly superior to most of our members, and he was a man of education. I now suspect him to have been a lawyer of some kind, but indeed I know not.

'Citizens,' he said, while we sat silent, 'has no one aught to say? Time was when your Chairman's chief duty was to conduct

the meeting so that every man should have his share of the discussion. To-night it would seem as if we had nothing to discuss. We will, if you please, consider the causes of the discouragement which has fallen upon the Friends of Freedom. I invite our Secretary, if he has any counsel to give, to speak upon this subject.'

I do not know why he singled me out. I seldom addressed the members, because, being young and ardent, I was liable to be carried away by my own feelings, so that I would lose the thread of my argument, forget the points I wished to touch upon, and mix up things on which I should have dwelt separately. Thus it too frequently happened that I would have to sit down, covered with confusion. This evening, however, the invitation of the Chairman found me full of thought upon that very subject. I therefore rose, and began, with some timidity, to point out, what everybody knew very well, that recent events had alienated many of our former supporters, and had sent over to the cause of Monarchy all the weak and timid.

Moreover, these excesses had greatly encouraged and strengthened the lovers of the old order. Therefore, I said, it was incumbent upon our Society, and upon all such societies as ours, to give no handle to those who pretended that our principles would lead to similar results in this country. That is to say, we ought to preserve great caution in our speeches and writings. As for those who had prophesied that a simultaneous rising of the whole people, strong in combined action, would achieve a bloodless Revolution, that, I argued, could only be expected when the French themselves had shown by a return to moderate counsels, and by the practice of those virtues which are expected of Republicans, what a nation governing itself could effect.

'When we have seen,' I said, 'a sovereign people ruling and reigning for the general welfare, and that alone; a country free from the corruption charged against a democracy and the certain tyranny of the aristocracy; minds cleared of priestcraft, priest domination, and superstition; all men

alike working together for the common weal, and none for their own selfish interests, it will be our time for action. Citizens,' I concluded, 'that time is not yet come. We must watch the progress and the development of the Gallic Republic. Meantime our old relations with the Republic are broken off; we can no more exchange with the French the messages of fraternity with which we hailed their first steps in freedom. War, horrid war, has begun again; the martial spirit of our country is again awakened; the old hatred of the French has burst forth with redoubled fury. Think—what chance is left for us? Should we be beaten is it likely that we shall copy the institutions of our conquerors? Should we be victorious shall we imitate the example of our conquered foes? In either event, our imitation of the French seems to me farther off than ever, and those who still advocate such an imitation will be called, and treated as, the enemies of their country.'

I sat down, not wholly satisfied with the reception of my speech. The Marquis shook his head.

'You have descended,' he said, 'to common sense. This is tedious. You are no longer interesting, Nevill. You will make your club ridiculous.' He handled a pinch of snuff delicately. Then he seized his gold-headed stick and hat. 'I shall depart. I shall come here no more. Farewell, Sublime Society of Snugs.' But this he murmured in my ear, and the others heard him not.

On the whole, the men seemed to agree with me, but unwillingly. With some of the more earnest men—I say not that all were either earnest or honest—the most glorious vision that had ever appeared to them was vanishing. Could there be—can there be—a dream more splendid than that of universal happiness and virtue? Nay, are there not some who believe that Christ Himself will come down to reign over mankind, rendered happy by His rule, for the space of a thousand years? These men saw the failure of their hopes with sad and sinking hearts. Some of our members, on the other hand, desired not the Kingdom of Heaven at all, but a general overturn of everything—the confiscation of all property, and a scramble for possession.

As I concluded, and sat down, the knock of a member—a private method of knocking was among our secrets—was heard at the door. When the door was opened, Richard Archer appeared. I had not, until then, observed his absence. With him, to my amazement, stood none other than George Bayssallance.

'*Tiens!*' said the Marquis, laying down his hat. 'Behold our Marat, and with him the victim of offended Love. This is interesting.'

Archer's face was eager and excited. He was anxious, too, and evidently labouring to keep himself under control.

'Brother citizens,' he said, 'I bring you a new member.'

'George'—I seized the new member by the arm—'what are you doing here? Why are you here? What do you know or care about the principles of this society?—This gentleman, citizens, is a plain sailor. He knows nothing of the Rights of Man.' I was, indeed, amazed to see him there. In his frame of mind, what could he mean by

joining us? What new attempt did he meditate? And why join us? I was not only amazed. I was filled with the foreboding of danger.

'Archer has taught me your principles,' said George, quietly. 'What is good enough for you is good for me as well, I take it.'

'No, you have never considered the question. You have nothing to do with the business, George. Give it up. What madness has brought you here? Have you not enough trouble on your head but you must seek new trouble? Here things are said not reported out of doors——'

'Citizens,' Archer interrupted, without ceremony, 'I have conversed with this new recruit, I find his mind fully prepared; his principles are ours; he is ready to join us, to work for us, to fight for us—if necessary.'

I could say nothing. George's face showed resolution and patience, but not the zeal of a recruit.

'Brother,' said Archer, turning to him, 'said I well? You are entirely with us?'

'Entirely with you,' George replied, quietly.

'He comes here, citizens, fully instructed in the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity, but ready to receive other instruction. He is prepared to carry out any orders that may be laid upon him.'

I felt a little uneasiness at these words—because the club had never laid any orders upon a member.

'At all events,' said the Templar, 'the man is old enough, and big enough, to take care of himself.'

'If he is willing to take the oath of brotherhood and secrecy,' said the Chairman, 'let him be sworn.'

'A Bible was placed in his hands, and he was placed in front of the Chairman.

'George Bayssallance,' he said. 'Before the Lord, George, thou art a tall and proper lad.—Art thou here desirous of entering the Sublime Society of Snugs with no secret or selfish purpose, but only for the good of mankind in general and this country in particular? If so, kiss the book.'

'I am,' said George, kissing the book.

'Wilt thou obey the ordinances and rules of the Society? Kiss the book again.'

'I will.'

'Wilt thou prove a brother among brothers; a friend among friends; a wise man among wise men; convivial, but not drunken; harmonious, but not noisy; a lover of reason, but not contentious; ever ready to debate and discuss, but not a babbler? Kiss the book.'

'I will endeavour so to act,' said the new member.

'Wilt thou maintain and defend, even with life itself, the sacred principles of humanity adopted and held by the Sublime Society? Kiss the book.'

'I will.'

The oath was then administered to him. Every society has its entrance oath, whether that of Freemasons, of Comical Cousins, of the Lumber Troop, or of Gormegans. I neither attack nor defend the practice. In the words of this oath the candidate prayed the Deity to smite him with many

disorders, all enumerated, if he broke the laws, rules, and conditions under which he was admitted to the Society. This form of words pronounced—George showed no trepidation nor any other emotion—and the book again kissed, the Chairman shook hands with the new member, congratulated him upon his election, which, he said, would ever after be remembered by him as the most important event in his life, and the one of which he would have most reason to be proud, and so received him as a Brother Snug.

Now, had the Club existed solely for purposes of conviviality and good fellowship such an oath would have been blasphemous. But the Convivial Snugs were gone, and a gang of conspirators remained, bent on overthrowing, if they could, the institutions of their country. Therefore such a form of admission was necessary, though in the event it proved that one person, at least, had no regard to the sanctity of an oath. At this moment, though we guessed it not, to join the Snugs was as dangerous as to become a follower of the Old Man of the Mountain, and

the Chairman, though this also he knew not, never uttered a truer prophecy when he told George that he had now accomplished the most important act of his whole life, and the one which he would remember to the end of it.

After the administration of the oath followed the imparting of the various ways by which he might know and recognise a Snug, supposing he were to meet one accidentally in strange places or foreign parts. This information, likely to prove so very useful, was speedily conveyed, and, thus enriched and fortified, George was conducted to a seat.

He sat down beside me, which, after my remonstrance, I took friendly.

'All is now arranged,' he whispered; 'that is why I am here. Lord love you, Nevill, my lad, I know nothing about Man's natural rights. All I have to do is to carry it through, whatever the event!'

'Good Heavens!—what is arranged?' I asked. As to his general meaning I had no doubt. He who had sought death in battle, fire, and water was now going to try some

other method. What had the Sublime Society of Snugs to do with such a man and such a resolution? His face terrified me. He was no longer perplexed and torn by doubt. Contentment had returned to him—or, at least, silent resignation. He smiled as he spoke, but with serious eyes.

'I have no longer any doubt,' he said, 'as to my plain duty. It is to try all methods until I find one by which I shall be called away. But I am in great hopes that this time——'

'George, what will you do?'

'What you advised, lad; I shall leave it—to the Lord.'

At this point Richard Archer rose to speak. The Marquis nodded his head pleasantly. 'Once more,' he murmured, 'I await the eloquence of the Britannic Marat.'

'Mr. Chairman and citizens,' he began, quietly, 'I am here this evening with an announcement which will, I doubt not, be received by all present'—here he looked at me—'by all, or nearly all, present, with something of the joy which awaits the faithful

in Heaven. I hear that you have listened this evening to an address from your secretary on the duty of this society at the present crisis. It is, I agree with him, a crisis of the greatest gravity. The recent just and admirable execution of a tyrant has, it is quite true, alienated from our ranks all the timid, all those who are afraid of seeing principles put into practice. The half-hearted cannot understand the necessity of Justice. Why, for for my own part, if it were found necessary to execute King George the Third, I should myself be honoured by sitting on the Tribunal of Condemnation. Justice is blind : it strikes at Kings and beggars alike. Here for his crimes a wretch swings outside Newgate. There for his crimes lies the headless trunk of a King. Do they reflect—but they cannot—that we ourselves should be ruthlessly sent to the scaffold for resisting the King and the nobles, and that it is only just, therefore, that King and nobles should go to the scaffold for resisting the sovereign power of the people? These cowards tremble because a King has been beheaded ; yet they look on with un-

concern when a shoplifter is hanged. Well, we have lost all cowards out of our ranks—they are gone; much good will they do to King George. We have lost others besides the cowards; we have lost the waverers. The massacres of which they make so much—the mere accidents of Revolution—the trifles which mark the first effervescence of liberty; these things have driven the waverers from our ranks. Those who acknowledged the reason of our argument, but hesitated whether to cast in their lot with us or with the tyrants, hesitate no longer. They have left us. Very well. Let things go. What remains? Citizens, WE REMAIN! We remain, who are the backbone of the country, the true people in its sovereignty, the men of fire and blood! We who are ready to hew our way through all the hireling troops the King may bring against us, though all the Lords and Bishops help with men and money! The French Revolution was made by a few hundreds of men first, and consolidated by a few thousands. I tell you that for one man who helped to make the French Revolution I can

bring five hundred. At this moment there are five hundred thousand ready and waiting! And I tell you more. This is what I came here this evening to tell you—All is ready! The hour has struck! The time has come! In four-and-twenty hours Great Britain will be a Republic!'

He paused and looked around. I sprang to my feet.

'I am the Secretary of this Society,' I said. 'All the correspondence passes through my hands. Nothing has been brought to me about any special preparations. The country is no more in readiness now than it was six months ago. Nay, far less, for a spirit of dismay is everywhere.'

'You and your Corresponding Societies have been set aside. We act without you. I am here this night to let you understand that those whose shilly-shally counsels have almost succeeded in betraying the Cause are set aside. The Constitutional Societies and the Friends of the People are traitors. You are all dismissed. We reign in your place. The People is sovereign at last!'

I have never been able to understand what was true in this speech. It is quite possible, and, indeed, very probable, that this man with a few, desperate like himself, had made a small party in imitation of the French, and had prepared for some kind of manifestation in certain centres. It is also possible that he over-rated the power of this party. It is quite certain that he possessed many of the qualities which distinguished the most desperate of the French party: he was quite ready to play the part of Marat, Danton, Desmoulins, or Robespierre, all of whom he regarded with profound and sincere admiration. It is also possible, judging from the future course of events, that the whole of this evening's oratory was a theatrical display intended to draw the victim deeper into the toils.

'You will not reign in this club,' I replied, hotly, 'until you can at least produce your credentials.'

'I understand the speaker,' cried the Chairman, 'to assert that this Sublime Society has no longer any reason for existence. I think he will acknowledge that no one

willingly ceases to exist because another man tells him that he is no longer of any usefulness to the community. The speaker will be good enough to explain. Shall the Society of Snugs be wiped out by a Brother Snug?'

'I say,' Archer went on, warming as he went, 'that such political clubs as this, whatever their name, will after this day cease to exist, because their purpose will have been accomplished. Listen, citizens. To-morrow evening, Sunday—on the only day when the British slave is free—the decisive blow will be struck. It will be struck simultaneously in a dozen places. Here in London, in Birmingham, in Sheffield, in Norwich—everywhere the people will be called upon at once to rise in the majesty of irresistible thousands, headed by the men of Fire and Blood, and will assert their sovereignty. What you have talked of doing, we have done. The time has gone by for arguments and talk—the thing is done. To-morrow evening let those who love Liberty rally round the red cap.' He produced this article from his pocket, and stuck it on his head, where it would have looked better had

it been a size larger. Then he folded his arms for the assembly to admire the effect.

'I am once more in Paris,' murmured the Marquis; 'I am again among the Lambs of Revolution, virtuous and incorruptible.'

'If,' I said, 'an insurrection has been planned without the consent of the societies to which we belong, we ought to have neither part not lot in it. I propose this, sir, as a resolution—"That we take no part in any movement not sanctioned by our Corresponding Societies."'

'To-morrow night,' Richard Archer repeated, 'you will lie in your beds warm and comfortable. It will be well for you if, in the general conflagration that shall arise, you are not burned in your beds. If you are lucky enough to escape, you may reflect that the work has been taken out of your hands, and is being performed by the true Revolutionists. In the morning you will find London in our hands; before nightfall King George and all his nobles will have fled, pale and trembling; in a week every church will be turned into a storehouse or a lecture hall; there will be no

more priests; there will be no more lawyers; no more landlords: no more rich men. All the property of the country will be divided among the people: peace will be made with France: hand in-hand we shall overrun the whole of Europe, welcomed by the people, while the Kings fly before us at the far-off sound of the drum. To-morrow night. To-morrow night.'

'Brother Snugs,' said the Chairman, laying down his pipe and speaking seriously. 'I know not, for my own part, how far these words are true. If they are true, then our brother, whose zeal for the cause is well known to us, has allied himself with a band or body of men whose principles may be just, but whose actions are detestable. This Society yields to none in its adherence to the great principles—Man is born free; all men are equal; all men have equal rights. We acknowledge no privileged class; we own no authority in thought; we bow the head neither to King, lord, or bishop; we receive no creed imposed upon the world by priests. Nay, if you come to that, there need be no laws and

no constables if every man would honestly stick to his own business. But we have as yet seen nothing in the conduct of the French Revolution to show that such a desirable condition of things has been arrived at by the change of Constitution. The individual man is the same as before, except that he has for the present larger opportunities of showing his propensities, which are mostly in the direction of the Devil. Very well. We are associated with certain other societies holding similar principles; we exchange papers and pamphlets; we know the opinions and the action of these societies. Now that any general insurrection should have been planned without the consent and approbation of these societies seems impossible.'

'They are deposed,' said Archer. 'They are set aside.'

'Or,' the Chairman continued, 'that these societies should have planned such a movement, so fraught with danger, without even mentioning the fact to this Sublime Society, is incredible. It is also incredible that a rising which is intended to result in conflagrations

and in massacres should have been considered by these societies. If then, it is true that the thing is to take place, let us for our parts resolve to have nothing to do with it. If members desire separately and individually to be hanged,' here George started and changed colour, 'let them do it, but not as brothers of this Society.'

'You are not wanted,' said Archer. 'We can do without you——'

'Parisian,' murmured the Marquis. 'He has acquired the latest style of Paris.'

'Gentlemen.' The Chairman departed from the usual mode of addressing the club. 'Gentlemen,' he repeated very earnestly, 'I know the temper of the City at this moment. It is, I assure you, very strong. Never was fidelity to the Throne stronger. Though a year ago it seemed as if principles of Freedom were making rapid strides, it is to-day certain that men cannot show their faces abroad who dare to profess these principles openly. Even if an attempt to rise be made in a hundred places at once, nothing will come but bloodshed and riot. All those who love order and

have property are prepared to rally round the King. Force will be met by stronger force. At the best nothing could be expected but for the mob to hold the town, and wreak mischief in it for a day or two. Good Heavens! How would another Gordon Riot, and a worse one, advance our holy and sacred Cause? But not for a single night will the mob be permitted to hold the town. The City is resolved to depend not so much upon the soldiers as upon themselves, in order to prevent such a calamity. Gentlemen, I agree with Nevill Comines, our Secretary. We must have neither part nor lot in such an attempt.'

Observe the natural end of all Revolutionary Societies. They are founded to advance principles by men who fail to understand what will happen if those principles were universally adopted. It is never in the minds of these philosophers the time for bloodshed and violence. But a Revolution which affects property, and attacks privilege, and destroys power, can never be carried through without violence and bloodshed.

Therefore, in the end, the men who scruple not to commit crime carry the day, and drive out the moderates. So that when the principles are established, the true leaders, those who would have restrained and guided the people, are nowhere to be found. Have we not seen this in Paris? Did we not see it in this small way, in the Sublime Society of Snugs?

Then followed a discussion, hot and fierce. It became manifest that the violent section of the club was stronger than the moderate, most of whom, as I have said, had already withdrawn. One after the other sprang to his feet and declaimed against the cowardice of those who shrank from force at the moment when force was ready. One, who wanted us to go out in a body and join the demonstration with flags, red sashes, and red caps, refused to believe that any violence would be attempted, and tried to persuade us that a peaceful promenade about the streets would settle the whole business. Another pretended to believe that the Guards would be with us.

The Chairman reminded the House that there was a Resolution before it. My friend the shabby author seconded it. Before it could be put, Archer jumped upon a chair and began a wild harangue. This, which was full of threats, prophecies, and denunciations, I omit. Indeed, it was shocking to hear, and would be far more shocking to read. He concluded with an amendment: 'That this Society is pledged to take action, whether that may result in violence or not, at all times, and whenever it seems good to the Sovereign People to assert its sovereignty.'

The resolution was seconded, both by the atheist from Oxford and the Templar, in the same words and in one breath.

'Citizens,' said the Chairman, 'we might talk for a month without getting any nearer to an agreement. I therefore put the amendment to the vote. It is proposed as an amendment that this Society is pledged to take action, whether that may result in violence or not, at all times and whenever it seems good to the Sovereign People to assert its sovereignty. Those who are in favour of

the amendment will declare the same in the usual manner. Twelve in favour. Those who are against—seven. The amendment is carried. Brother Secretary, you will enter the amendment as carried? Before declaring this meeting closed, I beg to inform the Society that from this moment I am no longer a member.'

'Nor I,' said another who had voted against it. 'Nor I,' said a third. As Secretary, I recorded their resignations. Unhappily, I did not record my own, though, I declare, I intended to resign with the Chairman. The amendment I duly entered upon the minutes on the spot, with the names of six resigning members. But not my own name. A most unfortunate omission, as you will learn.

'I declare this meeting duly adjourned until the next regular day of the club.'

The Chairman put on his hat and went away. Those who had voted for the amendment gathered together, called for drink, and began to talk earnestly among themselves.

I finished entering the minutes, in which I recorded the heads of Archer's speech, and

the words of Resolution and Amendment. Then I placed the minute-book in the muniment chest, or chest of archives, as we sublimely called the wooden box in which we kept our account books, list of members, and minute-book; put the key in my pocket, and walked away. The last I saw of George Bayssallance was that he was still sitting patient and silent, as if he was wholly unconcerned with what went on.

Outside, I found the Marquis waiting for me.

'My son,' he said, 'if your Marat is right I may as well pack up my portmanteau and go back to France again. One would rather die on the guillotine among one's own people and be cursed in French—I believe they still speak the old tongue—than on an English scaffold where one would only partly comprehend the execrations of the mob.'

'I do not believe it,' I said. 'Archer has gone mad. Such a movement could not possibly be resolved upon. The time is inopportune; the societies would never entrust their work to the conduct of such men.'

'Hear my advice,' he said. 'Go back to-night — or, at latest, to-morrow morning. Secure the books of the club. Destroy the minutes and the lists. Efface the memory of the club as much as possible. If violence is attempted let it not be possible to connect your name with it. Well; you have had your play. Your arguments, my friend, would be irresistible if men were governed by reason. But they are not. They are governed in all their actions by their own interests— by love of money, love of power, by vanity. You think they are governed by the love of Virtue? Never has that cold goddess had votaries so few. Her shrine is neglected; the grass grows in the courts of her Temple; the dust lies thick upon her altar. Go back to-morrow, my son, and secure the documents.'

I repeat, that I know not to this day how far Richard Archer deceived himself, or how far he intended to deceive us. I think there must have been a plot among a few fanatics, of whom he was one, to snatch the reins of power. Whether they had really organised a plan of universal insurrection I cannot say.

If so, why did it fail? Three or four risings there were, but they were insignificant. No; I cannot understand it. Perhaps, as I said above, all was part of a diabolical plot contrived by this man—the most wicked of all his generation.

'There will be trouble,' said the Marquis; 'but not much. I think I shall not pack up just yet. Little fire, much smoke. I remain. Keep the victim of Love out of the trouble, Nevill. Cupid should be satisfied with the punishment he has already inflicted upon him.'

The next day, being Sunday, we went to church. To my surprise, the Marquis was there. He sat in the pew next to ours, and, turning his head, he whispered to me from time to time.

'The devil is in the organ loft,' he said. 'Nothing less than the devil himself. I never heard the devil play the organ before.'

The devil dissembled at any rate, for the voluntary which preceded the service was very sweet and soft, and calculated to lift the soul to prayer and praise. The organist also played the chants with his usual soberness,

The Psalm appointed to be sung before the sermon proved afterwards appropriate to the occasion. It was the second :

> Why rage the heathen? and vain things
> Why do the people mind?
> Kings of the earth do set themselves,
> And princes are combined,
>
> To plot against the Lord, and His
> Anointed, saying thus,
> Let us asunder break their bands,
> And cast their cords from us.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Thou shalt as with a weighty rod
> Of iron break them all;
> And as a potter's sherd thou shalt
> Them dash in pieces small.

The service over, the organist remained, as usual, playing in the empty church. It was a great march that he played. There was victory in it, the shouts of the conquerors, the tramp of an army. He was celebrating beforehand, which is more lucky, the triumph of his cause.

Where was George? All that day he was nowhere to be found. I spent the day in a vain attempt to find him. Alas! had I, instead, taken the advice of the Marquis, and secured or destroyed the books!

CHAPTER X

AN ANXIOUS SUNDAY

Of all the days of my past life there are few which I remember so clearly as that Sunday when the last and heaviest blow was struck. I say the heaviest, because those that followed were only its natural consequences. Had it not been for the doings of this one day, the misfortunes that followed would never have happened.

The day of misfortune cast its shadows before. I lay all night feverish and wakeful, tossing from side to side, conjuring before my imagination the dreadful consequences of rebellion, and the dangers that had suddenly sprung up around us, like a host of soldiers hitherto invisible. I arose full of dismal forebodings. Outside, the sky was lowering; clouds charged with lightning hung over the

City, black and threatening. The admonitions of the wise old Frenchman rang in my ears. I ought to have brought away the books of the Society. I ought to have torn out the pages and destroyed them; why, there was still time; I might have hurried to the place early in the morning before service; there was still time enough. Alas! insensate wretch! I suffered the moments to pass away. To-morrow I would secure the books. To-morrow—to-morrow. It always comes. But the things that should be done on that day—what becomes of them? Where are they?

You have heard what a hymn we had that day in church—the words were words of warning. The Psalms for the day were penitential; the Lessons were of judgment upon sinners and the wrath of an offended God; the discourse of the preacher was on the fearful condition of those who disobey the discipline of the Church and refuse the means of Grace. 'You—you,' he seemed to say, speak to me, singled out from the congregation, 'you have been taught from childhood

upwards obedience to authority, respect for King and Laws. Yet you have forgotten your early lessons; you have allied yourself with rebels. What shall be done to you?'

Outside, the rain fell in sharp showers; the clouds darkened the light of day; the church was plunged in twilight; and while the voice of the preacher, calm and stern as the voice of a judge, pronounced sentence upon sinners, the thunder rolled without ceasing.

We went home after the service. At dinner my father, whose mind was greatly moved by recent events, talked of nothing but the horrors of Revolution and the dangers to the country from mischievous agitators. I think that in things political he was one of those who easily fall into a panic, and at this time the country was everywhere calling upon the Government for stronger measures—always stronger measures—of repression.

'What,' he asked, quoting, I believe, from some newspaper, 'is the use of Liberty if the goddess for whom our fathers fought and bled is to be used for the destruction of herself? Answer me that.' He was carving

a joint of roast veal, and flourished his knife as he spoke in order to give greater emphasis to his words. 'To be used for her own destruction!' he repeated. 'No—never let it be said that we Englishmen sat cowardly still while such a thing was attempted. Let an example be made, and that a signal and a terrible one.'

'My dear,' said his wife. 'Stuffing for Sylvia—it may tempt her.'

'Let sedition'—he frowned, but laid down the knife and helped the stuffing—'be treated in such times as these as High Treason. They used to hang for the space of two minutes, then cut down the criminal, and——'

'Not at dinner,' said my mother.

'We must revive,' he went on, 'the old punishment, with every circumstance of torture and horror. Such is the only fitting end for wretches who would import into this happy country the crimes of the French. In the days of my ancestors, who were Vidames de Troyes, such things would have been impossible. But they drove us into exile. The world may now perceive the consequences.'

Yes—and his own son, for whom he now proceeded to carve a generous plate of the Sunday roast, was also one of these traitors; the son of his friend, the Lieutenant, who, though of less exalted ancestry, was possessed of equal loyalty, was another; and his schoolmaster—that a schoolmaster should so presume—was another!

He continued in this vein during the whole dinner. And, I doubt not, after the same fashion did thousands of sober citizens discourse over the same Sunday dinner. It is a laudable custom with our good people to provide a generous dinner on the Sunday, when it can be enjoyed at leisure, and with the consciousness of service to God rendered, sins forgiven, and the soul fortified. In the week, dinner has to be taken during the press and business of the day: there is no time to dwell upon the flavour of the roast or the delicacy of the pudding. The housewife considers that the weekday meal is intended only to strengthen the body, that of the Sunday to please and gratify the palate. Therefore one may reasonably look for a

cheerful disposition to prevail, as well as a grateful heart. On this day one does not expect the dinner to be robbed of its best accompaniments by the calling down of fire and sword upon all who hold different opinions.

A son must not oppose, contradict, or presume to argue with his father. Therefore, I refrained from pointing out that a cause must not always be judged by the crimes committed in its name. Otherwise, how could one defend either side in any war, especially a religious war? I sat mute, downcast, and apprehensive.

My mother, for her part, was equally silent; partly because on such subjects she never ventured any other opinion than a comprehensive agreement with her spouse, and partly because her mind was full of other things. What does it matter to a woman whether the French, a hundred miles away and more, are slaughtering kings and nobles, when she sees her only daughter slowly wasting away? Sylvia sat up to dinner, but in an arm-chair, and supported by pillows;

and she ate nothing, but remained pale and listless, paying no heed to what was said.

It was a terrible dinner. My father, growing red in the face, continued to pour out his denunciations, ignorant that they were so many curses falling on the head of his son. Outside, as during Church Service, the thunder growled and the rain kept falling upon the windows. A day full of gloom. My heart sank low. I thought of Richard Archer, and of George, and the Sublime Society of Snugs; and I trembled.

'When I think,' summed up my father, that the last two years have witnessed the fall of a proud nobility, the destruction of all that was chivalrous in the realm of France, and the overthrow of religion, I have no patience with those who would defend the principles of revolution. When I reflect that this mad and ignorant people, drunk with their own freedom, which they call liberty, have sent to the scaffold a virtuous monarch, whose features my own are said to resemble—I trust the resemblance extends also to his virtues—I lose myself in indignation. My

blood boils; I would send every English revolutionary to the scaffold without compunction—ay, even if he were my dearest friend, my oldest companion—even my very son.'

With these words my father drank the last of the four glasses of port with which he was wont to conclude his Sunday dinner. He then pulled out his silk handkerchief, which he threw over his head, put up his feet on a footstool, sat well back in his chair, his elbows on the arms, and adjusted himself for his customary hour's sleep.

My mother rose, and put the decanters back into the cupboard.

'My own son,' murmured my father, his voice half-stifled by the handkerchief. 'Even my own son—I would—willingly I would.'

Then I arose and went out.

I felt like unto one found guilty, whose sentence is deferred. He knows not what it will be. A flogging almost to death—a long and miserable imprisonment in the company of wretches whose talk is intolerable—perhaps a shameful gibbet—perhaps transporta-

tion across the seas; he knows not, but expects the worst, and sits, meantime, mute and miserable, waiting with a fearful foreboding and expectancy.

I was so uneasy in my mind that I could not rest or keep still in any place. I first went in search of George. He had not been at home all night, nor had he yet come home, and they knew not whither he was gone or where he could be found, and on the kindly face of Sister Katherine was written the anxiety that now devoured all our hearts. I took first oars, and was taken across to Rotherhithe. The gate of the dock was closed and locked; George was not there, so I came back again.

It was then past five. Sister Katherine was making tea. I stayed there, being afraid to meet my father. The Lieutenant was gone to the Hope and Anchor, where he spent most of his evenings over a pipe of tobacco and a glass of punch.

On Sunday evening, while it is still early, and the men have not had time to get drunk, it is quiet in the Precinct. Later on there

are brawls in the streets; fighting and swearing among the men, with cries and shrieks from the women. To be sure, those who live in the place mind these noises no more than a dweller in Cheap minds the rolling of the carts and the grinding of the waggon-wheels. To-night, for instance, there were loud voices from St. Katherine's Stairs, and the people who passed to and from the ships, and used these Stairs, were certainly not singing Psalms and spiritual songs. These common things were not heeded.

'Sit down, Nevill,' she said, 'if 'tis only to keep me company.' She took another cup and saucer from the cupboard and placed them on the table. 'Most nights I care little about being alone: I am then sure of my company, as the saying is. But to-night I am afraid of myself. The lightning was so near this afternoon that I went out and sat under an elder-tree for safety. It has made me all of a tremble—that and my trouble about George. And I cut my thumb-nail this morning before ever I remembered the day of the week. That's the most unlucky

thing a body can do. Never thought of the day, my dear boy, till the deed was done. Cut your nails a Sunday, and the Devil's in your house all the week. Then this day is set down unlucky in the almanac. And my brother spilled salt at dinner, and crossed knives. I dreamed a dream on Friday—a bad dream—and I told it on Saturday. It will therefore come true. My left eye has been itching—a sure sign of bad luck. Everything points the same way. Something will happen to us, and that before long.'

'Indeed,' I said, 'I greatly fear it. Though enough has happened to us, the Lord knows.'

'We are bewitched, Nevill. I have said so all along, and I know it. Sylvia is bewitched, so that she is made to seem as if she hates her lover. If we cannot cure her, she will die. George is bewitched, so that he cannot be made to reason, but has fallen into a kind of madness. Good Heavens! if this continues, what will become of us?'

'Indeed, Sister Katherine, I do not know. But I fear the worst.'

'Let us take our tea. Let us try to possess our souls in patience.' She assumed a cheerfulness which she felt not, and busied herself with the teacups. 'Whatever happens, Nevill, is not so bad when it comes, as it seems, beforehand. This have I always observed. We bear a hundred burdens with patience when they are laid upon us one after the other, which, had they been foretold, would have made us pray for death. Let us have patience, and thank the good Lord for the alleviations which He sends.' 'Twas a pious soul. 'Mostly,' she added, 'I thank Him for the gift of tea. Mine is now drawn to a turn: a minute more, and you would taste the stalks; a minute less, and you would not taste the full fragrance of the herb.' She poured it out. 'An innocent drink, Nevill. If the French drank tea, they would not now be murdering kings and princes. It is the wine and beer, the brandy and the rum, that cause wars among nations and fights among men. 'Tis drink—'tis drink—'tis drink that causes all our troubles—unless, to be sure, love, or witchcraft, or gambling.'

We were not so troubled in mind but we could take our tea and toast, and truly Sister Katherine's hand was as true over her tea as over her rolling-pin.

'There is comfort in tea,' she continued. 'In drink there is only forgetfulness. Nevill, my heart bleeds for them. I see no good way out of it. If it were not for the thought that we are in the Lord's hands I know not how I could endure the sight.'

'Now that it is settled that he is to go away——'

'Nay, but when he is gone, what assurance remains that she will recover?'

'Alas! None.'

'And, if she recover and he should be cast away at sea, what then? I see no way; and look you, spite of all, Sylvia loves him still—I saw her yesterday reading an old letter of his, she kissed it and cried over it. Think you a girl would kiss and cry over a letter from a man she loathed?'

'Then, why?'

'Why? Because she is bewitched, I say. There can be no other reason. For if one

does but mention his name she shudders and falls to weeping, and is well nigh torn to pieces. She is possessed of a devil who makes her do things that her soul abhors. As for George—saw one ever young man so changed? He who was once blithe and merry, now has never a smile or a laugh. He who formerly was always singing and dancing, is now mute and glum; nothing moves him. All day long he sits in his repairing dock, and that gives him no joy. Last night he came not home at all; his bed is as I made it; to-day he has not come home. What does this mean? Where has he passed the night? How hath he spent the day? What will be the end?'

She shook her head mournfully.

After tea, we sat talking still of this melancholy theme. Grief and anxiety are not banished by talking over them: but they are softened.

Eight o'clock struck. We were still discussing the doleful present and the dismal future. 'Something,' Sister Katherine repeated, 'is going to happen. Something

always does happen when things have become intolerable. But, perhaps the worst has now befallen us, and relief will be sent us. Before the storm, the calm; after the wind, the rain and then the sunshine. Something, I say, will surely happen. I think I shall begin to hope. Things will now begin to mend.'

'And I am full of foreboding. Something will happen, but it will bring more trouble.'

While we spoke there came quick footsteps as of hurried men, and a knock at the door, which I went to open. On the doorstep stood the Lieutenant and my father.

'Is George here?' asked the former, sternly.

'No one is here except Sister Katherine and myself.'

They came in, pushing past me roughly.

'Brother!' cried Sister Katherine, 'what has happened?'

'Where is my son?—where is George?' asked the Lieutenant. His face was working with passion—I mean not wrath, but passion beyond wrath. It was distorted. He was in his uniform because it was Sunday. His

fingers were clutched, his eyes rolled. A deadly terror seized my heart, and I thought of the Saturday night. What had happened? As for my father, he, too, showed every sign of bewilderment and horror. What had happened?

'I knew that something—I told Nevill that something—I have felt all day,' said Sister Katherine. Then she sank into a chair. 'Tell me quickly, brother. Let me know the worst. Is George—is he—is our boy—dead?'

'I wish he was dead. It is worse than death, Sister. Death we could bear. He hath disgraced himself and us.'

'He only prays for death,' I said.

'Then will his prayer be granted. For he will die. But not as he would wish.'

'Brother—for mercy's sake—what has happened?'

'As for the King's uniform,' the Lieutenant replied, 'that I must never wear again without a blush. Yet how can I live and not wear it? And how can a man wear it whose only son——' He sat down, rose up, sat

down again, and again rose up in his trouble of mind, not knowing what he was doing.

Sister Katherine turned to my father.

'You, sir, perhaps, are able to tell me——'

'Sister Katherine, the most terrible thing in the world has happened. George, the son of my old friend, the descendant of a loyal line—formerly attached to the noble house of the De Comines—George Bayssallance, of all men in the world. George!—a sailor, bound to duty, not ignorant of rank and order—has, you will never credit it, dear Sister, but 'tis true. George'—he placed his hand on his breast and threw his head back, and became the living portrait of the late King Louis XVI. —'George, madam, hath become a rebel!'

Sister Katherine laughed; she laughed, like Sarai, incredulous.

'George a rebel? What next? George a rebel?'

'He is a rebel, Sister. He is a revolutionary. He is a Republican. He is a traitor to his country!'

'George a traitor?'

'He has joined the traitors—he has exhorted the mob—he has headed an insurrection.'

'It is impossible!'

'He is at the head of a mob. Hundreds are with him. They are crying for a Republic. Nay, by this time the constables have captured him, or the soldiers have dispersed the mob. Perhaps, he is shot.'

'Better for him and for us if he were shot,' said the Lieutenant. 'My son! Mine, a rebel!'

'We hoped that, perhaps, no one recognising him, he might have escaped and come here for hiding. But, no, no. Sister Katherine,' my father continued, earnestly, 'what have we done that these blows of Fortune should thus fall upon us? What means this wrath of Heaven upon a family which hath not, wittingly, sinned above the ordinary frailty of human nature? Such frailty is, we are taught, forgiven on repentance. What does it mean? These afflictions allotted to a family living in this sacred Precinct, where, with the rest of the Society

of St. Katherine's, they maintain the Christian life and show the exemplar of piety and religion among rude people! The Lord hath dealt upon us—upon us, of all people, chastisement of a kind to terrify the hardest heart. My daughter smitten with a strange disorder, sinking slowly, so far as we can see, into the grave, and George a revolutionary! George a mob orator! George heading a rebellion! I should as soon fancy my own son a revolutionary.' (Alas! that too, he had to learn and suffer.) 'George to incite the people, and lead an insurrection! Tell me, Sister Katherine, if thou canst, what these things mean?'

'They mean that we are bewitched. Brother—Mr. Comines—this have I maintained all along. They are bewitched. First, Sylvia, then George! Next? Who knows? Perhaps, Nevill. Why not? This boy has never caused his parents trouble, nor swerved from duty and religion. Nay, Nevill, never hang a head or blush. This is the truth. When the witch strikes again it may be at you.'

CHAPTER XI

THE INSURRECTION

On the eastern side of the Minories, Houndsditch, Bishopsgate Street Without, and Norton Folgate, there lies a part of London—without the City, and before the market gardens and cherry orchards begin—which is little known and never visited by the better sort of citizens.

It belongs chiefly to the parishes of St. Mary Matfelon, Whitechapel, and St. Leonard's, Shoreditch, though the people, who have of late years multiplied to an incredible extent, are reported to live for the most part without any religion; one or two new churches have been built here, but I believe they are poorly endowed, and have no share in the numerous charities and foundations belonging to the City of London. The very names of the streets

are unknown. Who has ever heard of Crispin Street, Wentford Street, or Brick Lane? The folk belong altogether to the mechanical class. When one goes along the Mile End Road, it is true there are many solid and substantial houses, and at Stepney, West Ham, Bow, and Ratcliffe Cross, merchants of repute have their country houses. But in this foreign or outlying part of the City, as crowded as any City parish, even those of Thames Street, there are no gentlefolk at all: the streets are mean, the houses small, and the people match their lodgings. Most of them get their living in the employ of the City merchants, who find a livelihood for an incredible number of poor folk; many, however, are independent workmen, exercising crafts requiring great skill and dexterity. Such are the watch and clock-makers, of whom there are here a great number; gold-beaters, glove-makers, embroiderers, cabinet-makers, wood-carvers, and so forth; at Spitalfields there is a whole village inhabited by French silk-weavers, a very quiet and industrious folk. These people live apart from the better class, who know

nothing of them; they are not void of understanding, but, on the other hand, they are of quick wit (to match the quickness of their fingers) and eagerly read, discuss, and consider all kinds of subjects, even those too high for them. Such men are easily carried away for lack of sufficient knowledge, and dangerous to the State.

None but those who understand the history of their country, the growth of institutions, and the necessity for rank and order, are qualified to speak or to hold an opinion on matters of State. This I now plainly perceive, though formerly I held the contrary. Human affairs, which are inextricably involved with considerations of self-interest, are but imperfectly administered with sole reference to rules of right and the propositions of philosophers. Consider! If a class of men, ignorant, though quick witted, should become powerful, they would assuredly attempt to reduce their opinions to practice. Their efforts to do this would cause worse things here than have ever happened in France, because our people are tenacious—the bulldog is their

model—if they lay hold of a thing they will not readily let it go.

On this Sunday afternoon there was a great gathering of people in a certain field at the back of Whitechapel Mount. It is a field much frequented on Sunday, because there is a pond in it where the young men can enjoy their favourite sport of duck or cat-hunting. In this field they also cause their dogs to fight; they bait bulls, bears, and badgers; they throw at cocks, and hold their prize-fights—such being their chosen method of spending the first day of the week, the Christian Sabbath. On every fine Sunday there are a good number in this field: on this day, for instance, there were assembled a great many who took no part in the sports, but waited about in little groups, expectant of something. By what secret agency they were moved to assemble, what messengers summoned them, why they obeyed the summons, I know not. If you were to ask one man why he went there, he would reply that it was because his friend bade him go as his companion. If you asked that companion, you would receive

much the same answer. There was nothing unusual in a walk down Whitechapel Road towards the green fields of Bow and Stepney; these men take that walk every Sunday. In the winter they get no farther than Half-way House; in the summer they stretch out as far as Bow and Bromley, Forest Gate and West Ham. Everywhere there are wayside taverns where they can drink, and in summer there are leafy bowers and daisied fields where the people can walk after the confinement of the week.

The groups of two or three stood about patiently, though showers fell and the clouds threatened. They talked in low tones: they whispered: they were excited about something. Some encouraged those who were faint-hearted: others hung back, and said that they would look on and see what came of it.

About four of the clock there walked through the open gate a small company of half a dozen, headed by a young man, a stranger to everybody present. He was tall and broad-shouldered. He swung his shoulders

as he walked, and he had the rolling gait which one expects in a sailor—a handsome and proper lad as one would see anywhere; his face was flushed a rosy red; and his eyes, which were bright, kept looking around him, as if expecting some person or persons not yet arrived.

When they had advanced a little way into the field, one of them laid a bundle on the grass and opened it. He took from it a sword with a crimson sash, and a belt with a brace of pistols. With these symbols of leadership he invested the tall young man, who was attired as a sober London merchant.

Another of his companions, who carried a pole with something wrapped round it, threw it open and unfurled it. The folds shook out in the air and showed the red Republican flag.

Another placed a three-legged stool firmly on the grass. A third blew a shrill loud whistle; the groups began to close in round this rostrum, or pulpit, made by the stool. And since a small crowd always becomes a great crowd, unless it is dispersed, just as a small fire quickly becomes a great fire if it is

not quenched, in two or three minutes the whole multitude gathered about this stool, though I am persuaded that not a quarter of the people present understood what was proposed to be said or done. The cat was left to sink or escape in the pond; and the dogs left off fighting because there was no one left to look at them.

The young man—the leader—mounted this tribune. He was already a head taller than the men around him; your London mechanic is short of stature—and now he was raised two feet and more above them, so that he commanded the crowd.

'Citizens,' he began in a sonorous voice, that would be heard a mile away. The crowd understood the full meaning of that word; no one present but knew that the crimes of the French Republicans were committed by so-called citizens. The word had never before been used at a meeting of London men; but they knew what it meant. There was going to be a seditious assembly, the more pleasant because it was illegal; but there were no constables within reach of Whitechapel Mount.

'Citizens,' the speaker went on, 'the time for discussion is over; the time for action has arrived. To-day—this very moment—we strike the first and decisive blow. I am here to give all brave men who are resolved on liberty the honour and glory of being the first to proclaim the commencement of a new era. First—are we agreed that King, Lords, and Church must all be swept away?'

It appeared that they were agreed—but not with enthusiasm.

'Next, are we agreed that all men are born to equal rights?'

Again, they were agreed—but without enthusiasm.

'Why, then, what need more words? Throw up your hats, citizens, and shout for the British Republic, proclaimed this day.'

One who was present, and informed me of this scene, said, further, that though the words were fiery, the manner was formal. 'He appeared,' said this witness, 'to be one who learned a lesson by heart, and was now saying it as a boy repeats his lines. His gestures were artificial, as if taught him with

the words: his voice was cold. No one was moved. Those who shouted were the men who only wanted the opportunity for a riot, and welcomed it with all its chances of plunders. This brave young gentleman had been put on to the work by some others too careful of their own skins to risk such a danger. He was but a cat's paw.' That, truly, was the case: you shall very soon discover who had made George a cat's paw.

'All those who mean business will follow me.' Here he drew his sword and flourished it over his head. 'Citizens, this day is the beginning of the Republic. All over England this day, and at this moment, there are risings of the people. It is a grand, combined effort. Ours is only one of many meetings in London. We march into the City: there we meet our comrades: we seize the town; we arm ourselves: the soldiers join us; everything falls into our hands; to-morrow the King is dethroned: the Princes fly: the lords go hang themselves for fear: the Republic is founded and firmly established in a single day. Who follows me, I say?'

He leaped from his stool and led the way from the field, followed by his companions, one of whom was active distributing the Phrygian cap, which everybody knows is the cap of Liberty. Some put them on, others, however, stuck them on their sticks and waved them about, laughing.

Those who followed were no more, even at the outset, than a hundred or so. Among them were half a dozen or so of eager enthusiasts whose fierce eyes showed their resolution. The rest were a rabble, mostly of lads anxious to see a fight, take part in it perhaps, and be ready at hand when the plundering should begin; hardly a single honest mechanic among them. Some were sailors from Ratcliffe, always ready for a fight; some were common mudlarks; they remembered, or had heard tell, of the Gordon Riots and the sack of the City; they made a great noise as they marched along the quiet road; they were armed with their sticks, of which every fellow carried one, and a good stout weapon it is, but of little use against a shower of bullets. As if a great and stable

Government was to be overturned by a hundred bludgeons!

The procession speedily reached the streets of the City, quiet this afternoon but for their noise. The London citizen goes not forth on Sunday afternoon; he rests and reposes after a copious dinner; he takes his wine with his friends; he reads a godly book; but he does not walk the streets except to church and back.

At Houndsditch a few of the lads broke away, moved by some impulse, and ran down that thoroughfare frightening the Jews who were standing about the doorways, talking and bargaining. What became of these fellows I do not know. The rest, still headed by George with his drawn sword, marched tumultuously along Leadenhall Street and Cornhill till they came to the Royal Exchange, where the Captain called a halt.

'Here,' he said, 'we are to wait for reinforcements. Here our comrades meet us.' They assembled in the triangular space opposite to the Royal Exchange. Then the rain began again, and some, with no stomach left

for the fight, sneaked off. Everybody else would probably have followed their example, but that some one—Heaven knows who—rolled up a barrel of rum, broached it, and began to hand round pannikins of this divine liquor. What is rain, which draws a man home, compared with rum, which bids him stay? So they stayed and drank about, pressing round and fighting for the drink.

As for George, he paid no heed at all to what was done; he stood in the front of all, sword in hand, waiting, looking steadily down the street, as if for the promised reinforcements.

Presently there came out of the Mansion House a messenger from the Lord Mayor. It was one of his lordship's footmen. The varlet came forth with all the importance inspired by a fine livery, with epaulettes and silver lace, but recoiled at the shouts of the mob. Then a dead cat was hurled at his head; he ducked to avoid it, and lost his hat, which was speedily caught up and kicked about by the crowd. But the fellow had the courage to single out the leader, and to address him.

'Sir,' he said, 'my master the Lord Mayor wishes to know who you are, and for what purpose you are here.'

'Tell him,' said George, 'we wait for reinforcements.'

'And tell the Lord Mayor,' said one of the hotheads with him, 'that we are the advance-guard of the great Republican army, and that we will enlist his lordship if he chooses to join us.'

'Sir,' said the footman, 'I will tell him.'

He turned: another shout greeted him: another dead cat came flying at his head: he ran. One would not have looked for dead cats at an unexpected Sunday meeting. At every pillory they abound, of course: they lie in the pockets of the mob, with the addled eggs and the rotten apples—a dainty pocketful.

There is, I believe, a back way—perhaps several—out of the Mansion House into Walbrook. Had these insurgents been keeping any kind of watch, they would have seen another messenger steal out of this postern and hasten westward.

'What is to be done?' asked he who bore

the flag. 'The men are getting drunk, and the rain does not leave off.'

'We must wait for reinforcements,' said George. 'Those are my orders. See! here they come.'

There advanced rapidly up Cheapside a body of men marching with some kind of order; yet not the military step, nor were they shouting or carrying flags.

'Reinforcements?' cried the standard-bearer. 'Never! They are constables! Shall we fight them?'

They were constables—as many as could be hastily got together—about sixty or seventy in all. They were led by the Upper Marshal himself, and were armed with their staves. They did not attack the crowd, but drew up before the Mansion House in order. Then the Lord Mayor came out in his robes and called upon the assembly to disperse. The assembly, now partly drunk, jeered and shouted. Then the Lord Mayor read the Riot Act. This done, he retired. Then the constables threw themselves upon the mob, and the fight began.

At the first onslaught George threw away his sword and snatched a bludgeon. With this weapon he stood, like a Roman hero, holding his position against all comers. Three men came upon him together: he beat them back. Again they rushed upon him: again they fell back with broken heads. Had he been well backed by his men, the constables would have had to retire. But half of them were too drunk to fight—he was a wise man who rolled that cask of rum among them; and, as for the others, some were puny creatures, not fit to cope with the stalwart constables.

By this time the streets were crowded with curious spectators always ready to look on at a fight. At every window appeared frightened faces; and still in the midst of the fighting some there were who lay before the cask, pannikin in hand, drinking as fast as they could get the rum.

Then there was a cry raised. 'The Guards! the Guards!'

At the double-quick they came along Cheapside, bayonets fixed, muskets loaded.

At the very sound of their feet and the aspect of their red coats, the whole mob, including all the spectators in the street, turned and fled. They fled every way; down Throgmorton Street, Threadneedle Street, and the Cornhill; but most by the narrow winding courts and lanes which make the City at this part a labyrinth. Before the soldiers had time to form, there was no enemy left. Half a dozen fellows lay helplessly drunk beside the cask. The rest had vanished.

'I know not,' George told me afterwards, 'what happened. I remember seeing the soldiers marching in good order up Cheapside. Now, thought I, they will fire, and I shall be killed. Whether they fired or not—whether we fought any longer—I know not. All I know is that I found myself alone in one of the City courts. I had lost my sash and sword, and my belt with the pistols. I was quite alone. Presently I came into Thames Street—and that, my lad, is all I can tell you, and all I shall ever know.'

CHAPTER XII

OAK APPLE DOCK—SURRENDER

We were still gazing upon each other with dismayed faces when Sister Katherine sprang to her feet, crying, 'There is the boy's footstep!' There were many footsteps outside, but her ears distinguished one. 'Quick, Nevill, quick—let him in! Lock and bar the door! If they look to take him here, he may climb over the back wall. That will gain him a little time at least.'

I ran to open the door. George stood without on the doorstep. I dragged him in, and hurriedly closed, locked, and barred the door. As if a wooden bar would keep him from the hands of the law!

For his part, he appeared in no hurry at all; nor did his face show the least disquiet.

He seemed astonished at my haste, slowly rolled in, leisurely hung up his hat, and, going into the parlour, took a chair and sat down without a word.

'Sir,' said his father, rising from his seat, 'is it true that you—you, my son—my tongue sticks—I can hardly say the words—you—you have led a band of miserable insurgents—rebels, Radical scoundrels, filth and scum—from Whitechapel Mount to the City, bawling all together for a Republic—you?'

'I think,' George replied, unmoved, 'that I did hear some talk of a Republic.'

'Is it true, sir, I ask again, that you led these villains?'

'I think,' said George, still unconcerned, 'that we all marched together, and I went first. Oh! yes, undoubtedly I was the first; otherwise I would not have joined them. That was the condition, you know.'

Heavens! How could a man answer such a question in a manner so unconcerned?

'Is it true,' his father continued, 'that you refused to disperse, and fought the constables?'

'If,' said George, 'there was to be no fighting, why should I make or meddle with the matter? It was no affair of mine. It was but a poor fight—a miserable business. Before the soldiers could fire upon us—but—I forget.' He spoke with stark, staring insensibility.

'Oh!' cried Sister Katherine, wringing her hands. 'We are bewitched indeed! What have I said from the beginning? Witchcraft! Witchcraft! Would that I knew the witch!'

'Rebel and traitor!' thundered the Lieutenant. 'Insensate, hardened villain! Shall one who has borne his Majesty's commission, and still wears his Majesty's uniform, harbour such a wretch? Go forth from my sight! Go forth! I say. Let me never see thy face again! Go forth, before I call down a curse from Heaven!'

'Brother! Brother!' Sister Katherine threw her arms round George's neck. 'Do not curse him—forbear! Have patience. He is bewitched. He is thine only son, George!—George!'

She turned to him. 'Oh!' she cried in despair, 'he marks nothing, he is bewitched! George! kneel to thy father for forgiveness! Oh! he hears nothing! he heeds nothing! what shall we do? what shall we do?'

'Go!' repeated the Lieutenant—pointing to the door. 'Go! Lest I myself with my own hands hale mine own son to a traitor's prison and a traitor's death.'

'Brother! Brother! George! George!' cried the unhappy sister, turning from one to the other, helplessly.

George, however, rose slowly.

'I am ordered to go. I obey. Henceforth——'

But here he paused and looked about him strangely. No one in his right mind could so look and so behave.

'Something,' he added, 'was said about a prison and a death. Perhaps I may find both—outside. I wish you good evening. Mr. Comines,' as if he had not perceived my father's presence until then. 'It is a cold night and rainy. But for the time of year——'

'Rebel and traitor!' cried my father, with flushing cheek. And indeed, that at such a moment this man could begin to speak of the weather was too much.

'Nevill,' said Sister Katherine, 'go with him. Do not leave him. Let him not go out of your sight. Stay with him. Perhaps this storm may blow over. Perhaps they will never find out who led the mob. Take him over to his Dock, and stay with him there. Oh, George—George—what can I do but pray for thee? Nay—what better can we do for any man but pray for him? Thou shalt have the prayers of the Church day by day—yea, of this ancient and religious Foundation. Go now, George, my dear. Oh, go quickly.'

We went out together, George making no reply. 'Twas the last time that the poor lad saw his father.

I led him—he showed no will or desire of his own, but was quite docile—to St. Katherine's Stairs. The night was dark and rainy. The wind had now risen, and blew cold up the river. We took oars and rowed out into

the middle of the Pool, and so down stream between the lines of shipping moored together, waiting to be discharged or take in cargo. Lights gleamed from the cabin windows, and every ship had her great lanthorn showing lights like lines of stars above the dark waters. Our watermen were silent, refraining even from bad words, and you may be sure that I had no desire to talk. The rain fell faster, and the wind blew colder. I was glad indeed when we landed at the Globe Stairs, Rotherhithe, close to Oak Apple Dock, which was marked even on this dark night by the black masts of the ship lying there for repairs.

In every dock along the river, north and south, there is within the gates a small cottage or lodge for the residence of the watchman. He lives here, and never leaves the dock from the time when the workmen go at evening until they resume their labours in the morning. Here, I thought, George might, perhaps, remain for a while in safety, provided that no one in the crowd, either of those who followed him, or of those who looked on,

should have recognised him. Certainly there could be few to recognise the face of this sailor, who had spent most of his life upon the sea.

I dismissed the watchman—astonished at our appearance—to his bed in the room above. The room was furnished with two chairs, a table, and a cupboard. Over the mantel-shelf hung a blunderbuss, with a fly-marked card explaining that it was loaded; the watchman's bludgeon stood in a corner; his rattle (which would have been useless in so lonely a spot) lay on the mantel-shelf, where were also his pipe and tobacco-jar. Fortunately, there was a good fire of ship's wood (the best in the world), and an inch or two of candle was left. So we sat down, each in a chair beside the fire, to dry and warm ourselves.

For a long time neither spoke. As for myself, I knew not what to say; and, as for George, he was in no mood for talking.

Presently, the candle flickered and went out. But there was plenty of wood, and the light of the fire was enough. George sat

back in his chair, his long legs stretched out and his hands in his pockets. But he was not asleep. Outside, the wind whistled in the shrouds of the ship, and the lines rattled against the masts ; we heard the plashing and lapping of the waters among the timber-piles at the dock gates. Now and then there was the dropping of oars as some boat, manned by night plunderers, made its way up stream to rob the ships, or returned home laden with their booty.

'George,' I said at last, 'are you sleeping?'

'Nay, lad, why should I sleep? I am waiting.'

'For what?'

'For the traitor's prison and the traitor's death.'

'Nay, I hope that you shall escape prison. No one could have known you in the crowd.' Here a thought pierced my heart like a knife. No one? Then who could have told the story to the Lieutenant? Perhaps, however, 'twas a friend who would tell no one else.

'Since,' said George, 'I am not to die by

fire or by water, or by bullet or by sword, or by bludgeon, the Lord hath reserved for me another kind of death. What matters? Who am I that I should rebel against the will of the Lord?'

'Oh, George! put that thought away. Why should the Lord desire thy death?'

'Nay, that is already settled. Why talk like that? Dick Archer was a wiser man. He told me that the only certain way of death, next to murder, poison, or stabbing, with which I will have nothing at all to do, is to lead an insurrection. "Look you, brother," said Dick, "if there is fighting—there can never be an insurrection without fighting—those who lead are mostly killed at the outset"—at the outset, Nevill, think of that—"or if the rising fail, they are afterwards killed for their share in it. Or, if the rising succeeds, they are generally killed by the ingratitude of the mob. So, you see, the end of such an undertaking is certain."'

'Then it was in order to get killed, and for no other reason whatever, that you consented to lead a revolutionary mob?'

'That was my purpose. What else should I do it for?'

'Could you not think of your father, George? Was it well done?' Then I could say no more on this head, because, alas! what about myself? Had I thought upon my father and his opinions?

'I thought that I should be killed in the fight; that was all I thought upon. Now I consider, nothing could more anger my father. When it is all over, lad, you will tell him that I was no rebel, indeed, only that I was constrained to find a way of death. As for the fight, it was a mere fizzle; yet very much astonished I was to find myself out of it without a scratch. Well, but Dick Archer knew. If not in the fight, then after the fight, a traitor's death. Why not?'

'Dick Archer,' I said, hotly, 'is a wise man, and so is the devil, his master. Why, George, they will hang up all your followers with you for high treason if they can.'

'Ay; they are a villainous lot. 'Twill do them good to hang up all.'

I groaned aloud.

'Now, my lad, Dick was right, you see, and I have, after all, found out the way. Now I shall trouble myself no more. I have done my part. The Lord will do the rest. My mind is at peace, and for Sylvia's sake will I cheerfully endure all that is to follow.'

With these words, the firelight showing a cheerful and even a happy face, he laid his head upon the table and instantly fell into a profound sleep, breathing like a child, disturbed by no terrors, startled by no anxieties.

I, too, presently fell asleep. In the morning I was awakened by the watchman coming down the stairs to ring the workmen's bell. But I fell asleep again. When I awoke an hour or two later everybody was at work upon the ship in the hold; the carpenters were shaping and sawing, the caulkers were tapping, the painters were chattering as they sat on their hanging boards, and from the river came the daily tumult from the ships going up and down, the boats, and the lighters.

George was still sleeping. He had changed his position, and now slept leaning back in

his chair. Heavens; could this man, strong and comely in his early manhood, with all the promise of a long life before him, be doomed to a shameful death upon the gallows, before many days were gone? There was a little spark of fire still left in the embers; I placed some more wood upon them. Then I opened the door and stepped out. The clouds and rain had passed away. The morning was cold and clear. The river sparkled in the sunlight; from the marshes of Rotherhithe I heard the note of a bird; across the water three corpses hung on their gibbets and turned the joy of the morning into bitterness, for thinking of what might be the fate of the poor lad in the lodge.

The cold air awakened him. He rose and stretched out his arms.

'Nevill, my lad,' he said, cheerfully, 'all my troubles are over. Dick Archer is a wise physician.' He went forth into the fresh air and looked about him. 'Ha!' he said, breathing the air with satisfaction, 'I smell salt water. This puts life into a man.'

'Life, and not death, George.'

He turned, and smiled with great seriousness in his eyes. 'We are in the hands of the Lord,' he replied. 'Since it is death—well—it is not my ordering, but His. Come, let us have breakfast, I am hungry.'

Breakfast there was none, except a morsel of fat pork and a lump of bread, three weeks old, which constituted all the stores of the watchman. To the west of Globe Stairs, however, lies the village of Rotherhithe or Redriff, where many decent people live, mostly masters and retired masters of ships. Where there are sea-captains, there are certainly taverns; and where there are taverns, there are victuals. It took, therefore, very little time for our watchman to fetch a goodly piece of cold boiled beef, bread, butter, and a gallon or so of small ale with which we made shift; indeed, a very excellent breakfast it was—the best we were to eat for a long time to come and George as merry with it as if he was still an apprentice home from a voyage.

Breakfast despatched, George became once more a man of business. He remembered that he was the proprietor of Oak Apple Dock, and

that these workmen were his. He therefore proceeded to make an inspection of the work in hand. First he walked round the quay, which was strewn with spars, chains, ropes, blocks, and all kinds of gear—some under sheds, some lying in the open. The dock was dry, and the tall gates closed against the river. Within stood a fine vessel of five hundred tons, shored up by timbers. She was brought in for repairs, and thirty or forty men were at work upon her within and without, scraping, painting, caulking, taking out rotten timbers, making her once more seaworthy. The only way of getting on board this ship was by means of a plank, one end of which rested on the quay and the other on the bulwarks over the upper deck of the ship. To run across this narrow bridge, which springs up and down beneath the weight of a man, is accounted nothing by sailors and dock-carpenters; but a landsman, considering the depth below, and the certainty of broken bones if one were to fall, hesitates before he trusts himself to cross. According to the followers of the False Prophet, on the Day of Judgment a bridge

no broader than the edge of a razor will be stretched across the Valley of Hinnom. All souls must pass over this bridge. The righteous will be supported by angels; but there will be no angels for the wicked.

To see George pass lightly over this shaky plank reminded one of that fable. I was watching him from the door of the Lodge, when I became aware of footsteps outside, the plashing of boots in mire, and the voices of men. At first I paid no heed, thinking they must be workmen of the dock. But they were all engaged. There is no other dock till you get round the Point, and near to Deptford.

And save for the little village of Redriff, and a row of mean houses called, I believe, Jamaica Street, and inhabited by such as worked in river-side docks and yards, the fields and marshes stretch out unbroken, except by ponds and lazy streams.

The men halted at the gates. Still, I felt no anxiety. Then the side-door was opened, and a head looked in. My heart sank low, my pulse stood still, my hair well-nigh rose on

end. For by the gold upon his hat and by the Crown upon his staff the man was proclaimed a peace-officer. Then the worst and heaviest blow of all had fallen. They were come to arrest George for last night's business. He had sought death once too often. This man, a Deputy Marshal, was followed by eight constables. They were stout and sturdy fellows, their coats buttoned tight, carrying stout bludgeons, and of resolute appearance. The Deputy Marshal, for his part, kept looking behind him as if for their protection; certainly, in single encounter with George, he would have come off second-best.

He looked about the Dock. I, standing at the door of the Lodge, made no sign. At that moment George stepped from the ship upon the plank, intending to come on shore again.

'That's our man,' cried one of the constables with an oath. 'He it was who gave me this plaguey knock over the eye;' indeed, his left eye presented a lamentable spectacle. 'I'll swear to him anywhere. 'Twas him that led the mob.'

'And I,' cried another. 'I will swear to him as well.'

George, at sight of the men stopped halfway across the bridge.

The Deputy Marshal stepped briskly along the quay.

'George Bayssallance,' he said.

'That is my name,' George replied, still standing on the plank.

'Proprietor of the Oak Apple Dock, Rotherhithe.'

'The same, at your service.'

'Lately mate on board an East Indiaman.'

'My case, exactly,' he said, smiling cheerfully.

'I arrest you, George Bayssallance, on a charge of High Treason. Here is my warrant.' He pulled it out.

'Bring it across, my friend,' said George.

By this time the workmen of the yard had become aware of something stirring—something out of the way. Now with one consent they climbed up their ropes, and stood upon the deck, every man armed with something—

and at the word arrest they murmured ominously.

'Bring it across, my friend,' repeated George.

The Deputy Marshal put one foot on the plank.

Then the men bawled all together, 'Let him come—let him come,' and brandished their hatchets and hammers.

If the Deputy Marshal had ventured across it would, I am persuaded, have been bad for him.

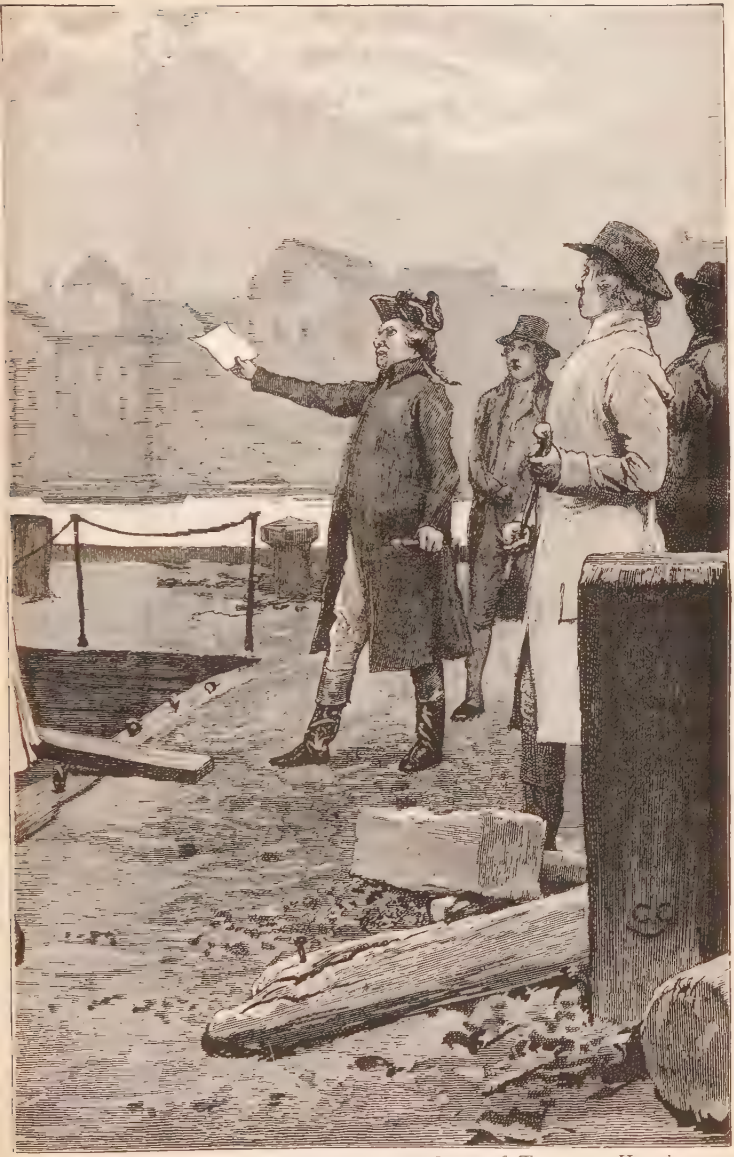
'Quiet, men,' said George, 'I know how to tackle him.'

With that he set his foot on the other end of the plank, and caused it to dance up and down, a schoolboy's trick, but disquieting to a man unaccustomed to this kind of bridge. The Deputy Marshal fell back terrified.

'Let one of your men bring it across, my friend,' said George.

The men advanced one after the other and looked first at the depths below—a dry dock with a ship in it looks dark and dreadful—

warrant.



"'*I arrest you, George Bayssallance, on a charge of Treason. Here is my warrant.*"'

and at the shaking bridge and the stalwart man upon it; nay, one or two, as you have seen, had proved that strength and valour—and at the threatening man beyond—and they returned.

'Surrender, George Bayssallance,' said the Deputy Marshal.

George turned, and walked back to the ship.

'Will you choose to walk aboard, gentlemen?' he asked.

They looked at each other and at the plank. Not one ventured.

'Then, gentlemen, if no one will come on board——' he kicked the plank, and it fell down into the depth with a crash. 'There! what a misfortune! Because now you cannot come to me, and I cannot get across to you—what shall be done?'

The workmen laughed aloud. The Deputy Marshal looked solemn.

'Come, sir,' he said, trying conciliation. 'You must not resist the Law. You can't escape, you know, and we are prepared to wait here all day—all night, too, if necessary;

we can get ladders. In short, we must take you in the long run.'

'You think I cannot escape?'

'You cannot possibly escape. There are eight constables, all resolute men, and you must leave the ship some time or other.'

'Oh, yes; I shall leave the ship some time or other.'

'There can't be much provision on board, I take it. Come, Mr. Bayssallance, listen to reason. Think how much better it will look when your trial comes on, if I can step into the box and say that the prisoner gave himself up without any trouble. I might even add, with tears of contrition, if you made it worth my while. Come, sir, you are a substantial man—all of us would be glad to get you off if we could. You must surrender, however, but we will give our evidence for you—won't we, men?—if so be you make it worth our while.'

The honest fellows all murmured their extreme readiness to oblige in this particular.

'Besides, sir,' the Deputy Marshal continued, 'who is to swear that you led the

mob? 'Tis true one or two of us show the marks of your bludgeon. But these are marks which a substantial gentleman like yourself can easily rub out, and no malice left. Very well, then. Where is the evidence of the Crown? Some may be got to swear that you were fighting. Well, the afternoon was gloomy. They might very well be mistaken. Anybody might be mistaken, particularly in the face of a stranger; and you don't look as if you were much hurt. Now, it stands to reason that in such a fight you ought to have had your head broken; and, again it was Sunday afternoon, and you were probably taking a nap at home after dinner. Lord! It's nothing. The case will break down before the magistrates at the very outset. If I were your honour, I should think nothing at all about it. Any good lawyer will see you through with it.'

'So I can't escape,' said George, taking no notice of this long harangue. 'That is what you think, is it?'

He laughed so cheerfully, and his face so beamed with good humour that I began to

have some hopes that he might intend something. For instance, we were all on one side of the dock, but there was a quay on the other side as well. How if he were to get off the ship to that side and so escape over the wall while the constables were still considering how to get at him.

'Don't talk of escape, sir,' said the Deputy Marshal. 'I implore you to consider how it will seem to a jury if we have to swear that you refused to surrender and tried to escape. We should be justified in firing upon you if we carried muskets. Consider, sir, the charge is most serious. If it ends in a conviction, 'twill be a capital offence; the temper of the people is roused against revolutionaries. You must be careful. Once more, Mr. Bayssallance—once more, sir, you cannot escape; we must take you. Surrender, therefore, and come with us without further shilly-shally.'

'You think I cannot escape, do you?' asked George again.

'What odds what we think?' replied the officer. 'You have played us a trick—Lord! we bear no malice therefore but you are

trapped. Come down quickly, and you shall see how my evidence shall move the Court. That is, if you are otherwise reasonable,' he added.

George made no reply, but walked aft. The ship, an old-fashioned craft, high in the poop and low in the waist, lay with her bows inland, her bowsprit sticking out over the dock gates, and her stern towards the river. By reason of her length and the shortness of the dock, her stern cabins almost hung over the great tide-gates, opened only to float a ship in or out.

We crowded along the quay, the Deputy Marshal first, curious to see what George was going to do. There was a coil of rope lying beside the wheel. First he lashed one end of this to the wheel itself. Then he took up the coil, and, with the practised hand of a sailor, he threw the rope over the tide-gates into the river beyond. Then I understood what he was going to do, and I rejoiced, because if he had the sense to put himself on board a King's ship or a volunteer, or even a trading vessel on the point of sailing, as an able seaman, he

would be surely in perfect safety. He was going to escape by means of this rope.

There are two things to understand. The top beam of the gates, being about a foot in breadth, presented a way from one side of the dock to the other without going all round. But, as some dock-carpenters may have their heads turned with looking down into flowing water on one side and the depths of the dock on the other, a light handrail was run along, except for a space in the middle where the gates joined. This was unprotected.

That is the first thing. The next is that we were close to Globe Stairs, and that about all the stairs down the river there is always a number of boats belonging to the watermen, the building-yard men, and the dock-men. George knew perfectly well that moored to the piles outside his dock, and belonging to the stairs, there were plenty of boats. I knew this, too, and waited to see how he would carry out his design.

Having cast his rope over, he went below for a minute or two, and returned bearing two light sculls with him. He then threw himself

over, and slid, by the aid of the rope, from the ship to the bridge of the gates, where he stood for a moment and laughed at the constables.

Now, had they known of this way over the gates, they might, perhaps, have prevented him by occupying it. I say perhaps, because there was only room for one man at a time. That is, the whole *posse comitatus* might have ranged themselves along the bridge; yet it was so narrow that only one man could fight at a time, and he only at a great disadvantage, as being unused to the situation, and fighting with a man who knew not the fear of height and dangerous places, and was accustomed to running backwards and forwards by this way. The constables, however, saw only a narrow beam; and as for crossing it in order to arrest their prisoner, even the Deputy Marshal did not so much as propose it to them.

We waited, therefore, to see what he would do next.

He walked along the bridge to the other side, that nearest the stairs. Then he took the rope in his hands, swung off, and disappeared.

A moment afterwards, as we looked over the wooden parapet upon the river, he floated out in a little dingy, adjusting his sculls.

'Good day, gentlemen,' he shouted. 'Pleasant journey back again. Send out for some liquor, Nevill, don't let them go home empty.'

So he dropped his sculls into the water, and crossed over to the opposite bank. The workmen burst into cheering of derision as well as of triumph.

'He has escaped you,' I said to the Deputy Marshal, who with his posse now looked little better than so many fools, crestfallen and astonished, while the workmen on board laughed at their discomfiture.

'We shall have him yet. There are too many who would swear to him. Young gentleman,' said the Deputy Marshal, 'what I said was true. Submission and a clever attorney, and a little expenditure, with a good and respectable *alibi*, would pull Mr. Baysallance out of this plight. Now, if he is caught, which will certainly happen, he will certainly be hanged. Yes, for sure, his neck

will now be stretched. Pity! Pity!' He shook his head compassionately.

'May I set some liquor before you, sir? There is good liquor at the Dolphin Inn, hard by. After your fatigues you must be thirsty. It may console you to find that your prisoner had a proper sense of what was due to your creature comforts. Will you choose rum, sir, or any other liquor?'

'Rum, young gentleman, by all means, since you are so generous. It is not every one who sets drink before the officers of justice.'

I exhorted the workmen to go on with their work, their master being now safe, and these officers only engaged in their duty.

Over the rum and water in the lodge, the Deputy Marshal grew friendly.

'You heard me, sir—you can bear witness—how I almost moved that young man, for his own good, to surrender. Sir, I ought to have been a barrister. I was born to be a lawyer. I could have moved juries. When I attend the trials I never hear the counsel without feeling that I could make out a better

case. Genius, sir. Pure genius. But what is the use of genius without opportunity? I was originally an attorney's clerk, and am now, as you see, risen to the rank of Deputy Marshal. Some day, perhaps, I shall be Marshal. What then? I can never be what I was intended to become—King's Counsel, Serjeant-at-Law, Puisne Judge, Lord Chief Justice of England. Ah! There's ambition for you! There's a field! Well, in the next world we shall all receive our deserts. As for me, I expect nothing short of Puisne Judge to begin with, and Lord Chancellor to end with; and many a Judge, Serjeant-at-Law, King's Counsel, and member of the Outer Bar that I know of now, and carry it off flauntingly, shall be simple ushers of my court, and wear white thread gloves.'

After this foretaste of heavenly joys, he drank my health in a tumbler of hot rum and water.

'May I ask, sir, the name of my noble entertainer? Most of those whom I arrest, or try to arrest, receive my visit in a spirit of hostility. I am glad to find that Mr. Bays-

sallance, though he has been so ill-advised as to escape, has left behind him a friend so civil and hospitable. Sir, I respect you and your friend. Sir, I honour you for this attention to the officers of the law. Sir, I drink again to your very good health. Ah! it's only on the river-side that one finds rum so mellow, and so old.'

'You are very welcome,' I said. 'As for my name and quality, I am an old school-fellow and playmate of George Bayssallance, and my name is Nevill Comines, and I am a clerk in the Admiralty Office at Somerset House.'

He started and turned very red, looking at me in a manner that should have awakened my suspicions. But my mind was full of George.

'Hark ye, brother,' he whispered, with a sudden change of manner, 'if there is another boat anywhere handy, get down the rope, and into that boat, and join your friend. My men know thee not. Sheer off, while there is yet time. Shog; that's the word. Shog!'

'Join my friend?' I replied, thinking he

was drunk. 'Sheer off? Why should I?' For truly by this time my mind was so full of George and his dangers that I had clean forgotten my own. 'To begin with, I do not know where my friend is at this moment to be found.'

'Young gentleman,' he whispered again, his face again becoming very red, 'take the advice of one who is older than yourself. Shog, before more questions are asked. There is the door wide open. Be no more seen until the storm is past and gone. Lie snug, and all may be forgotten. Stay where you are, and the Lord knows what may happen. Best—'tis best,' I say. He actually took me by the shoulders and shoved me towards the door. I gazed upon him with bewilderment. Not even at this juncture did I remember what he might mean.

'A man must do his duty,' he went on. 'There's nothing to show that I knew my duty. Your name, young gentleman—I am sometimes hard of hearing—is Tomlinson—Tomlinson. Nothing against the name of Tomlinson, to my knowledge. Good day to

you, Mr. Tomlinson, and many thanks for the compliment of the rum.'

'I think you must be mad,' I said. 'Who put the name of Tomlinson into your head? As for my name, it is, as any one knows——'

'No, no; I do not know,' he interrupted, eagerly. 'Let it be Tomlinson, or, indeed, Jenkins, or anything that you fancy; but not — not — in the name of God, young gentleman,' he lowered his voice — 'not Comines.'

'Why should I vanish?' I asked. 'To-night I go home to St. Katherine's Hospital. To-morrow I go to my desk at Somerset House.'

'Will nothing move you? Will no threat terrify you?'

I laughed. Who would believe that I could still be so demented as not to suspect?

'In that case,' he said, looking me hard in the face, 'young gentleman,' he began again, 'must I say more? If your name is not Tomlinson, but—you know—that other name—that devil of a name which may get you into trouble—that name——'

'Why,' I said, in my stupidity, 'it is Nevill Comines, and a very good name too.'

'Well, then, you have had every chance, and, though it goes against the grain, there is no longer any help for it.' He sighed, and produced a whistle, which he blew. Two of his constables appeared at the door. He then took up his staff with the gold crown on top, and lugged a paper out of his pocket. 'Nevill Comines,' he said, 'aged twenty-two, clerk in His Majesty's Office of the Admiralty, secretary of a certain seditious society called The Snugs—I apprehend you, Nevill Comines, on the charge of High Treason.'

Upon this, but too late, the full force of yesterday's doings, and the neglected warnings of the Deputy Marshal, rushed into my mind, and I think I must have swooned, which is unmanly.

When I recovered I was sitting in a chair, one of the men on either side of me.

'In consequence of information received, Mr. Comines,' the Deputy Marshal went on, 'I have visited the house where you met and I have seized upon your papers.'

Heavens! If I had not neglected the plain and simple warnings! If I had destroyed those papers in time!

'Well, sir,' continued the officer, 'I am much concerned. It seems, after drinking with a man to arrest him, as if—but it is the law. I am an officer of the law; I am carrying out my duties. Very well, then. In every profession we have our little ceremonies—formalities. A barrister wears his wig; a clergyman puts on his cassock; we of this branch—now, Tom—have a little ceremony.' Here the men seized my wrists and made them fast, without my being able to make the least resistance. 'It is called the handcuff, nothing but a formality—nothing but that. Well, one bird flies away, and another is caught; that is the way of the world. It is bad for the bird who is caught, but he ought always to think of the good luck of him who has escaped.'

'You are pleased to be a philosopher, sir.'

'Oh, sir! that is too high a word; philosophy belongs to corresponding societies and to such associations as your own. Indeed, sir,

I could not afford to become a philosopher; I should lose my office and my living. Philosophy? The Lord forbid!'

'What are you going to do with me?'

'Why'—here he looked into the pannikin, which was empty—'since there is no more drink, your honour might do well to fortify your spirits before we set out——'

'I want no drink.'

'In that case, the sooner we go home the better. When I say home, of course I mean the Prison of Newgate—the last home it has proved, indeed, to many. To you, sir, I hope it may prove a resting-place for a night or two only. A cheerful place and a merry one you will find it.'

CHAPTER XIII

COMMITTED FOR TRIAL

Thus taken prisoner and handcuffed, I was led away by the Deputy Marshal and his posse of constables. The people of the Dock, when they had seen their master escape, returned presently to work and paid no more attention to the officers of the law. Therefore, when I walked out with my guard, it was unobserved, and no attempt was made to rescue me.

They marched me first to the Globe Stairs where they had a boat lying in readiness; they then rowed up the river through London and Blackfriars Bridges as far as the Savoy Stairs, where we landed.

'We are going to Bow Street,' said the Deputy Marshal, 'to the house of the Magis-

trate before whom we have laid the sworn information.'

It is not an agreeable thing thus to be marched through the streets of London in broad daylight. The sight of a prisoner handcuffed and guarded by a posse of constables is as attractive to the crowd as a fight or a fallen horse. The boys ran after us hooting; the draymen stopped their horses; the hackney coachmen drew up to let us pass; the people stared after us; the very windows seemed full of heads curiously craned out to look after us. Fortunately it is not far from the Savoy Stairs to Bow Street.

When we arrived at the new Police Office, the business of the day was not yet disposed of, and we had to wait while the magistrate, Sir William Coddington, heard the rest of the cases. He sat at a table underneath the lion and the unicorn; before him was an open space, separated from the rest of the Court, which is open to the public. A railed space was provided for prisoners, and another for witnesses. Half a dozen Bow Street runners were in attendance. I was placed in the space

before the table. The magistrate sat quiet and unmoved while the witnesses gave their evidence and the prisoner in the dock protested and cross-examined.

Well, my turn came at length. I was not placed in the dock, but I stood while the magistrate addressed me.

'Before committing a prisoner for trial,' he said, 'it is my duty to hear such evidence as may be offered in support of the charge against him. In case the evidence is not sufficient I can refuse to commit. In case the offence is slight I can admit bail. In your case I have certain information sworn in my presence this morning. On the strength of this I have issued a warrant, and I shall commit you for trial. You shall hear the information. You may make any observation you please, but you must remember you are not on your trial. Constables, remove the prisoner's handcuffs, and place him a chair.'

The coldness of this speech struck me to the very soul. I sat down while the clerk began to read the information in a monotonous voice, as some clergymen read the Service.

The sworn information seemed of great length.

Robert Olwin, Beadle of the Liberty of the Tower, made affidavit that he had seized in a certain wooden box, &c., the books here produced containing lists of the members and the minutes of the Society called The Snugs.

William Fritter, victualler, swore that Nevill Comines was the Secretary of the Club or Society which met once a week in his house: that he had always understood it to be a convivial association of the shopkeepers and other respectable people of the neighbourhood.

Saunders Welsh, Gentleman, High Constable of the Parish of St. Stephen's, Walbrook, deposed to the fact of the riot on Sunday afternoon, headed by one George Bayssallance, a member of the Society in question.

The information read: 'This,' said the magistrate, 'is the case so far against the prisoner. The Crown may produce other witnesses. Meantime I commit you, Nevill Comines, to the Gaol of Newgate, there to be

kept in custody until you are brought forth to stand your trial.'

So that was over, and I was fully committed. And then, but this time without handcuffs, and in a hackney coach, I was carried to Newgate Prison.

There are, as those who have passed by this gloomy place know very well, three gates to the prison, all opening upon one side. The first of these is the small iron door which is thrown open only for the passage of the condemned convict on his way outside to execution. It is the Gate of Agony. The next is the private door of the Governor's house. The third is the Gate of Honour Lost, that by which prisoners are received and discharged, or sent out to the hulks; also that by which visitors enter and depart, and the business of the prison is carried on. You walk up five or six steps, and find yourself faced by a double door, of which the outer half is a kind of hatch, five feet high, consisting of stout heart-of-oak, cased and bossed with iron, and the inner part, which swings open, and is closed separately, is a heavy iron grill, through

which the gaolers can inspect a visitor before admitting him.

The upper part was now open, and a man was standing on watch over the lower part.

'Prisoner,' said the Deputy Marshal, briefly.

The man unlocked and unbarred and we entered. The door was closed and locked immediately. I found myself in a large room twenty-five feet long and sixteen broad, of great height, with an arched roof, and lit by three small semicircular windows, placed so high up that no one could hope to reach them; and if he did, they were heavily barred. Truly, a fit ante-room, with its barred-door and barred-windows, to such a prison! This room is called the Lodge.

I observed a row of buckets placed in readiness in case of fire. There was a wooden bench along one side, a table stood against the wall, with a book and ink and pens; there was one chair; there were two other doors. One of these opened into a small room in which was a cheerful fire burning: this was one of the rooms reserved for the

turnkeys. I looked into it with envy. Those happy dogs could step outside if they chose, their work once done. As for me—when should I step outside, and under what circumstances? I noticed these and many other little things of no importance, because in a time of mental trouble one notices things that otherwise would escape. The mind catches at straws to save itself.

A number of people, men and women, were waiting in this room; some presenting a most hardened and downcast appearance, others (but these were fewer) were respectable folk, who appeared ashamed of being in such a place. These were friends or visitors of the prisoners waiting their turn for admission. As they passed one by one into the prison, each in turn their pockets were examined, and a form of search made by a turnkey and a woman stationed there for the purpose, so as to prevent the introduction of ropes or instruments of escape, and of spirits, which are strictly forbidden. But I observed that the examination was of the slightest; and, indeed, spirits are really introduced

into the prison, as you will immediately perceive.

Among those who waited were several who, by their appearance, and by the bags they carried, seemed to be attorneys, or their clerks, engaged to advise prisoners in their defence. These marched up and down, waiting impatiently, and showing not the least concern. It was their daily business—they came here every day and saw the same sights.

Close beside me stood a young woman of respectable appearance. She carried a baby in her arms, and she was weeping without restraint.

The Deputy Marshal whispered in my ear.

'Look at her. She is the wife of a young fellow who will be hanged come Monday morning. She is going to see him in the condemned cell. 'Tis hard on her. But she will presently dry her tears and forget him, and marry another. It frightens her to come here and think of his hanging. As for him, I warrant the dog has got his tankard in his hand, and his pipe between his lips.'

Then there came in three young women,

dressed with some elegance, and all of pleasing appearance.

Among them was one whose face and manners betrayed that she was not long from the country; her cheek had still the blush and hue of health and youth; her eye was bright and humid; her rosy lips were parted. She might have sat or stood as a model for a painter, to be called my Lady Innocence.

What did such a girl in such a place?

Her friends tramped up the stairs and into the Lodge as if they were quite accustomed to the prison—which, indeed, was the case. But she hung back as if unwilling.

'Indeed,' she said, 'I will not go any farther. I am afraid. I do not like going to a prison. It may bring bad luck.'

'Come, Jenny,' said one of her friends, 'don't be a fool. No one will eat you.'

So she came in.

'Lord!' she whispered, but so loudly that I overheard. 'They have brought in a prisoner. A young gentleman, too! The poor young gentleman! what has he done, think you, Dolly?'

'I know not. They are always bringing in prisoners. We shall see him presently, I doubt not, within.'

The second speaker, I observed, lacked the innocent rustical look of her companion.

'I have seen dozens brought in. As for their going out again——'

'Lord, Dolly! will they hang the poor young gentleman?'

'Very like. They hang a cart-load every six weeks. You shall come to see him hanged if you like. When a gentleman is hanged he dies quiet and resigned. The rogue it is who kicks off his shoes.'

'Dolly, I am afraid. This is a dreadful place. Let us run away.'

'You are a fool, Jenny; besides, the Captain expects us. What matter to you if the gentleman is hanged or not? Why shouldn't he be hanged? A short life and a merry—that is the word for Newgate. He is no worse off than a soldier killed in battle. Here they are all happy because they know the worst. When their time comes—why, when all is told, it is better than suffocating

in bed—my end, likely, and yours, too; what odds? Jenny,' she whispered earnestly, 'have you forgotten the bottle of rum for the Captain?'

'No, no; I have it in my pocket.'

'You step in between Sophy and me, in the middle; look as if you've got nothing. To be sure the searcher lets a body pass in as often as not without trouble. Why should she search? Why shouldn't the Captain keep his spirits up with a drop of rum? Besides, the Captain oiled her palm last week with half a guinea.'

These ladies had friends in the prison, then. But the place was every day thronged with visitors—as the prisoners, so their friends!

The second door was opened. The Governor of the prison himself came in, followed by two stout turnkeys. The officer in charge of the Lodge reported my capture.

The Governor, a man of hard appearance, glanced at me with neither interest nor curiosity. This, I confess, humiliated me. A prisoner feels that, at all events, a little interest is due to him.

'Nevill Comines,' he said. 'Enter his name. Age, twenty-two; occupation, writer in His Majesty's Office of the Admiralty; residence, St. Katherine's by the Tower; charge, High Treason. Nevill Comines, your trial will come on at the Sessions following the time when the Crown has completed your case. Until your trial you will be in my custody. Take him away, and put on his irons.'

'Sir,' I cried, 'by your leave, sir, I am an untried man; I am held innocent till I am proved guilty. With submission, sir, an innocent man should not be loaded with irons; they are the outward marks of guilt.'

'As for your innocence, sir,' said the Governor, coldly, 'you are doubtless the best judge of that. I have nothing to do with a prisoner's guilt or with his innocence—I keep him safe until he is tried, and safe after his trial until he is hanged or transported. In order to keep you safe, sir, I clap you and all my prisoners into irons.'

'But I am not yet found guilty,' I urged.

'You are my prisoner. On that point set your mind at rest. You shall hear the rules of the prison, and you will obey them, or it will be the worse for you.'

So saying, he went away.

'Sir'—my friend, the Deputy Marshal, plucked me by the sleeve—'suffer me to advise your honour. Do not argue with the Governor of the gaol. As for the irons, if you consent to pay garnish you will escape with a light and handsome pair. Lord bless me! some of them take a pleasure in their irons. "Music of Newgate," they say, jingling them. "Newgate Music." They wil not hurt you; and, as for the look of the thing, even if you should find them not to agree with your good looks—why, what of it? It isn't the irons—it is the being in prison that galls. Pay the garnish, and be resigned.'

'But——' I replied, thinking of my slender stock, and knowing beforehand that my father, in the extremity of his resentment, would give me nothing.

'Sir'—the Deputy Marshal divined my

thoughts—'your friends will have to pay the garnish and the prison dues for you. They must do so. Believe me, the place is bad enough even for those who can afford a private room in the Master's house. But for a young gentleman like yourself to consort with the master-felons on the common side—that, sir, would be barbarity. Why, suppose you to go among them at this moment, the next you would find yourself without your coat, without your waistcoat, without your hat, your purse, or your buckles. All would be taken from you; and at night you would be locked up with four-and-twenty villains—greater villains were never hanged—to sleep on a sloping board, with a rug for mattress, and to listen to talk more foul and wicked than you can hear on the river at Horn Fair Day. Pay anything—pay anything rather than that.'

'Come,' said one of the turnkeys. 'For garnish, as respects the irons, the gentleman will pay a single guinea; for admission to the State side he will pay three guineas; and for rent of his bed half a guinea. For another

half-guinea he will have coal and candle, plates and knife.'

'And for food?' I asked.

'He will have a penny loaf every day.' The fellow grinned.

'You will have what you pay for,' said the Deputy Marshal.

'Is there nothing cheaper?'

'The gentleman can enter on the Master's side,' said the turnkey. 'The admission is thirteen shillings and sixpence, and half a guinea garnish; his rent will be half a crown a week. Those on the Master's side are mostly tradesmen—shoemakers and such—who carry on their trades while they are in prison. Footpads and shoplifters many of them. Not fit company for a young gentleman.'

I grew desperate with the thought of losing all my money at the outset.

'What if I refuse to pay anything?'

'You have heard what the Deputy Marshal told you. The common side of Newgate is not a place where gentlemen seek society. But you will do as you please. Come with me now and be ironed.'

Well: there was little choice. I parted with my friend, the Deputy Marshal, for whom at this moment of leaving him I felt something like friendship, and I went with the turnkeys into the prison. We turned to the left into a dark and gloomy passage, through another heavy door of oak and iron, and so into a small chamber hung about with irons, manacles, handcuffs, chains of all kinds, ropes for the pinioning of the condemned before execution, the cat for flogging, and other instruments of justice. The man took down a pair of irons, rusty, heavy—such as might have been used for Samson by the Philistines. Terrified, I pulled out a guinea, and procured for this consideration the use of a pair of light shining irons which, the turnkey assured me, while he riveted them, had just been worn by a certain murderer recently executed. My predecessor had, it appeared, found them quite to his taste. The sight of their brightness and the music of their jingling, said the turnkey, amused him, and diverted his mind from the contemplation of death. Heavens! To think that a man

about to die could be amused by the jingling of his chains!

I next agreed, though with much misgiving, to pay an admission fee to the State side, of which the turnkey, in the name of the Governor, generously bated one third, or one guinea—business, he said, being slack on that side, though brisk in the master-felons' wards. This sum paid down, together with half a guinea for rent and half a guinea for garnish, which left me very low in purse, he bade me follow him to my new lodging.

I obeyed, finding the irons a great hindrance in walking, besides the fact that they filled me with shame, and made me long to hide my head in some corner where no one should see my disgrace. So he led me through one dark passage into another, now past high walls and now across open courts. Yonder, he told me, were the stairs leading to the chapel. Under the chapel were the cells for refractory prisoners. Here was the court given up to the common prisoners, those who paid nothing. The place was crowded, not only with the

prisoners, but with their friends. Surely there can be no viler place in the whole world than the court or yard used by the poorer felons, surrounded by the wards in which they sleep. You can tell the prisoners from the visitors by their irons, otherwise there is nothing to distinguish them. They all loll and lie about together, visitors and prisoners alike, for the most part showing by their bearing that they belong to the detestable and mischievous class of those who will not work if they can avoid work by stealing. Rogues, vagabonds, and thieves were they all who filled this yard, and they drank their beer and sang and laughed as if next week would not bring their condemnation. Nearly all these wretches, the turnkey told me, were certain to be hanged. I speak of what I saw on my first visit. Later on I learned to distinguish—they are not all so bad.

Then we passed through another passage into a court smaller than that of the master-felons, surrounded, like it, by lofty stone walls and buildings.

'This is the State side,' said the turnkey; 'and here, sir, is your room.'

He opened the door and showed me into a room on the ground-floor of tolerable proportions, long and somewhat narrow for its length. It was lighted by four semicircular windows, placed high up and strongly barred, one of them was above the door. The walls were wainscotted or lined with oak, black with age and dirt, and studded with great nails. The floor, without any carpet, was horribly dirty; there was a roaring fire; the air was close and smelt of cooking, tobacco, beer, and everything that can be imagined to belong to a room in which four or five men live, sleep, dress, and cook their meals. For furniture, there were chairs and a table and five pallet beds. About the fire was gathered a group consisting of four or five men and three girls. Bottles and glasses were on the table, and all were drinking. The girls I recognised for the three visitors who were waiting in the Lodge. I was sorry to perceive that my Lady Innocence had already, in a short quarter of an hour, acquired a

flushed cheek and a brightened eye. The man who sat beside her, and had his arm round her waist, was a fellow whom at first sight you would set down as a swashbuckler; a man of forty or so, whose puffed face spoke of potations. The seal of many evil passions was stamped upon his forehead. He wore a dressing-gown and slippers, and occupied the only elbow-chair in the room.

'Gentlemen,' said the turnkey, 'here is a new collegian.' And so, without more words, he went away and left me at the doorway.

'La!' said Lady Innocence. 'It is the young gentleman. La! I hope they will not hang him. I could not bear to see a proper fellow hanged. And they have put him in irons, too.'

The legs of all the other men in the room were, however, similarly adorned. She looked about her and noted this fact, and blushed to think that she had given offence by alluding to this delicate circumstance.

'Sir,' said the Captain—I call him so because I never heard any other name given to him, 'Sir, I drink your health and to our

'The man who sat beside her had his arm round her waist.'

better acquaintance.' He raised his glass and bowed politely. 'Be seated, sir; there is a chair next to our friend, Mr. Thorpe. Our better acquaintance,' he went on, after I had taken my seat, 'will be greatly promoted by another bottle or two. This bottle runs low. I take your guinea, sir'—I took the hint, and, with sinking heart, produced my last guinea and gave it him—'as a sign and a token that you are willing to promote the harmony of the ward. This is not the common side of the prison. Here we are all gentlemen. This is, in a manner of speech, the Bond Street of Newgate. It is our coffee house, our tavern, our assembly room, where beauty does not disdain to show her lovely face,' he pointed to the girls. 'It is also our hell, as I shall take pleasure in showing you, sir, after supper, over a pack of cards. We are birds in a cage, it is true, but if you get everything in the cage that you can get outside, what odds for the bars? Here you have no anxiety; your creditors cannot dun you; they may try to keep you in; you fear no highwayman or burglar; after you have been

tried, you fear no more the arm of the law. I wish you a long and peaceful residence, sir; your name escapes me.'

'My name is Comines, and with all respect, sir, I hope that your wish may not be granted.'

'So say all when they first come here. But I, who have inhabited the State side for three years and more, tell you that I have never before known true luxury and ease. They tried me at the Old Bailey close by. I was sentenced, now I come to think upon it, to the hulks and transportation. Ho, ho! But I came back here, and here I remain. When a man is a man of family—I hope, Mr. Comines, that you are a man of family—the Judge may pass any sentence he pleases—but that man of family remains on the State side. Nay, I know not whether I would wish to go out again. Sophy and Jenny and Sue come here as readily as to a tavern; my friends know where to find me; my enemies have done their worst; the company of the ward changes continually; we have no time to quarrel; the best friends part the soonest;

one goes to the hulks, the other to the condemned cell; we lose no time in grief; we drink and gamble continually. As for you, sir, I hope your case will not lead you to the cell. If it does, remember that family interest may get you respite—but I hope not.'

'I cannot tell,' I replied, 'whither my case may lead me.'

'Even the condemned cell is not without its comforts—one can drink in the Press Yard—though the unmanly lamentations of some do much interfere with philosophical and comfortable drinking. But since we must all die, what matter whether to-day or to-morrow? Death should have no terrors to him who reflects that it is as well to be suffocated quickly in the open air, and before an admiring, even an envious, mob, as to be choked slowly on one's feather bed, with no one to watch your dying agonies but a greedy apothecary.'

I learned afterwards, that this man, an illegitimate son of some great lord, and therefore, as he boasted, a man of family, had really by this family influence been saved first

from the gallows, which he richly deserved, and, secondly, from transportation, to which he was sentenced. What he did, I know not; his father, however, who was powerful enough to save him from the consequences of guilt, could not procure his liberation. He therefore continued in Newgate, eating and drinking of the best, until his death, which happened a year or two later.

Sitting next to me was a person of grave appearance and manner—whom the Captain had named Thorpe—a substantial merchant. He seemed about fifty-five years of age: he drank not with the Captain and his friends, but he smoked a pipe of tobacco. He presently turned to me with a smile, showing his white teeth—as for a smile, I love to see it in man or woman—but this man's smile was too ready.

'Young gentleman,' he said, 'I do not welcome thee to such a place. I hope thy stay will be as short as my own. For my part, I do but await the formality—the mere formality—of a trial.'

'I do not know,' I replied, 'how long I

shall be here, or what will be the event. I am arrested on a charge of High Treason!'

'High Treason?' He pushed back his chair as if afraid of being implicated by mere contact. 'High Treason! Shall the Prime Warden of a City Company sit in the same room with a rebel?'

'High Treason!' cried the Captain, sitting up. 'What? Say that again. Have we traitors here?'

'High Treason!' cried the Lady Innocence, starting to her feet. 'Oh!—the monster! He will murder us, let us run away, Dolly. Let us fly!'

'Hark ye, brother,' said the Captain. 'Here are many brave fellows accused of making mistakes about other peoples' houses, their horses, and their money, imitating their signatures, and so forth. Any one may be charged with such a thing; that makes no difference in companionship. But we are all loyal to King and Constitution. Here, if you please, we will have no tampering with our liberties. There shall be given no countenance to traitors. No conspiracies and plots shall be

allowed in Newgate while I am here. Mark that, sir, mark that, otherwise you shall speedily be made to feel the weight of my resentment and my cudgel.'

'It is not likely that you will be called upon to interfere,' I said. 'If you do, I shall know how to protect myself. Cudgel against cudgel, blustering sir.'

'Very well, then—very well. You are warned.' The Captain turned round in his chair and took another glass of wine.

The girl whom I have called the Lady Innocence continued to gaze upon me with pity and curiosity.

'So young,' murmured the merchant. 'The pity of it! The pity! Dear, dear. Ta-ta-ta—the pity of it!'

'Well, sir,' said I, plucking up a little, 'it is not pleasant for any one, old or young, to be brought to such a place. As for yourself, now, if without offence I may ask the nature of the charge for which you await your trial.'

'Oh! certainly! No offence at all. It is nothing—a mere nothing—a case which the magistrate himself, though he said he had no

option but to send it up for trial, admitted to have no foundation. They will put me in the dock, read over the indictment, call for witnesses, and when there are none, they will dismiss the case, and discharge the prisoner without the slightest stain upon his character. Of that there is no doubt whatever—not the least doubt. I do not distress my mind with considering the thing as doubtful. Not at all. I sleep well, I eat well, I drink well, I grow fat and lusty in this prison. Because, young man, my heart is free from guilt.'

'Indeed, sir, I hope the end may be as you expect.'

'I shall leave the prison, and surrounded by my friends, who will hold a banquet in my honour, I shall go back to my house in Harp Lane, and shall renew my services as Prime Warden of my Company—an ancient and honourable Company—and member of the Select Vestry of All Hallows the Great.'

'You are happy, sir, in the consciousness of innocence. The charge itself?'

'A tilly-vally—an invention—a mere trifling suggestion, without a tittle of proof.

Ha! It moves me to laughter! Forgery, they call it. Yes, forgery,' he added slowly, 'forgery they called it. Ha! ha! Forgery! It is an excellent joke. Ha! ha!'

Said the Captain,

'It is so good a joke that every six weeks some one dances to the music of it with his feet in the air.'

The merchant of Harp Lane turned pale.

'At this very moment, you may go visit as fine a young fellow as ever stepped—a lad of spirit, mark you, although he was but a quill-driver in the City. What then? He must have his mistress and drive her out on Sunday, as well as his betters. We are all alike, though some are rich and some are poor. When a young fellow is poor he helps himself. This young fellow—'twould do you good to hear him sing—helped himself by means of his quill, which is sometimes a deadly instrument.'

'Sir,' said the merchant, 'I am not concerned with this history.'

'He lies in the condemned cell, or takes

his walks abroad in the Press Yard—poor devil. Yesterday I went to see him, and we cracked a bottle together, so that he plucked up his spirits and danced a hornpipe. Next Sunday you shall see him in the pew of State, while the chaplain exhorts him to repentance. Ay! They all repent; they are sorry that they took so little, and that so clumsily. He repents that his forgery was not for ten times the amount, and that he could not pass it off, as he tried, on his master's son. These reflections will weigh upon his soul till the end, which is Monday morning.'

'How can you talk so, Captain?' said Miss Jenny. 'La! Now! Only to think of being hanged! And I hope that no one in this room will have such a fate—especially this young gentleman here.'

She meant me, and smiled sweetly.

'Talk not to me of the Press Yard and the cell,' said the merchant, who had been showing every sign of terror and anxiety. 'What have we to do with wretches who would even rob their masters to pay for their riotous living? Let them be hanged, and that with-

out pity. As for you, my young friend,' he turned to me, 'let me, as one old enough to be your father, earnestly exhort you to employ the time that remains to you in a becoming spirit. Acknowledge and confess your iniquities. Pay no heed to the lewd and profane talk which is too common in this place. Avoid drink'—he looked at the Captain—'shun bad company,' his pipe pointed, perhaps accidentally, at my Lady Innocence. 'Repent while there is opportunity. The hours fly. Repent in time. Read your Bible and meditate upon the wrath of an offended Deity. Fix your mind wholly upon the next world.'

'When Squaretoes has done,' said the Captain, 'come to me.'

'Say to yourself daily,' continued my new Mentor, 'that the law provides such and such for your case, and that the punishment thus decreed will be surely meted out to you. Perhaps you may fondly imagine that the evidence against you is not so strong as to justify conviction.'

'I think the case will prove weak against

me,' I said, 'because I have never advocated insurrection or rebellion.'

'What odds about your case?' said the Captain. 'It is the Judge that makes the case weak or strong. Inquire into the temper of the Judge, and look for the end accordingly.'

'Too many prisoners,' continued the merchant, 'delude themselves in this manner. They think and say that their case is so weak that they must get off.' Heavens! only two minutes ago he was himself maintaining the same thing with regard to his own case. Thus do we see those faults in others which exist unseen in ourselves. 'Be not one of those unfortunates. Show a spirit prepared for the worst. Now in the case of High Treason what is the worst?' He approached this delicate part of the subject with manifest enjoyment. 'For traitors, it is not considered that mere hanging is sufficient. Murderers are hanged and shoplifters——'

'And forgers,' said the Captain, but the merchant seemed not to hear.

'Because they deprive a man of his life or

of property, which makes life tolerable. But traitors commit crimes against a whole community. They are therefore sentenced to be hanged first, but are left swinging for five minutes only and are then taken off the rope, being still quick, and disembowelled with a butcher's knife; an operation causing the greatest agony, under which they expire. They are next quartered. Such has always been the righteous punishment ordained for traitors. Such is the wisdom of our forefathers.'

'If you come to that,' I said, 'the hanging reserved for forgers kills them quite as effectually, if not so quickly; and very likely it causes as much agony. After the hanging, the body of the forger is taken to Surgeons' Hall, where it is cut up for scientific purposes. I would as lief be quartered when I am dead as dissected. Perhaps, however, you are of a different opinion.'

'Young man,' he replied, with dignity, 'I fear that I have thrown away good advice. You are rude and unmannerly. What have I to do with hanging? Learn, sir, that a man

of my quality, a merchant of my position, Prime Warden of an ancient and honourable Company, cannot commit forgery. He cannot, sir, I say he cannot.' He repeated the words with swelling cheek. 'No one ever heard of such a thing. His position forbids it—forbids it, sir.'

He rose, put on his hat, and walked forth into the courtyard.

'There goes a poor devil,' said the Captain, 'who would eat his cake and have it. Hanged he will be for a certainty, if only as an example to his brother merchants; much good may it do the fat and greedy guzzlers! Not possible for his worthiness to forge? Why, if you speak of forgery, never was a craftier forgery committed. Old Squaretoes will surely swing, whoever else may get off.'

About nine o'clock of the evening I sat alone at last. The orgy was over. The Captain's supper with which he had treated the ladies was finished at last, and the bowl of punch made with the smuggled rum was out. The gallant Captain himself lay on his bed,

whither he had been carried by the united efforts of the ladies, his neckerchief untied, his face swollen, his breathing loud—he was in the condition commonly called 'as drunk as David's sow.' The merchant, too, had gone to bed after taking as much punch as was good for him, and now lay fast asleep. If these things were done on the State side, I thought, what must be the pleasures of the Master-felons' Ward?

We were locked in for the night, the fire was nearly out, the candle was low. The striking of the hour from St. Sepulchre's was like the tolling of a knell.

The only good thing about Newgate is the rule which sends away visitors early (even then some contrive to stay all night). This gives an opportunity for meditation to the poor wretches left in the wards. For the first time I was able to consider my most melancholy situation.

Consider: I had no more money, a few shillings was all my stock; I could not hope that my father or Sister Katherine, or the Prebendary himself would befriend me. No,

I was cast out; that was certain. I could never be forgiven. What was I to do? How to live? I must go forth into the common side, and mate with the felons and profligates there. I must live upon the penny loaf provided daily for the prisoners. I could get no help from lawyers, having no money. Finally, I should be hanged, very likely as a traitor. Here was matter enough for reflection!

A man must be indeed insensible if he feels no shame, or pain, or remorse when he finds himself in a common prison waiting for his trial, and that a trial which may end in a shameful death. A man, I say, must be an insensible wretch who at such a moment does not think of the misery he has brought upon his parents and his friends. To me it seemed as if I could not begin to think in any order. All together the thoughts crowded into my mind. I saw myself in irons, under lock and key, the companion of villains; I saw my mother weeping, my father speechless with wrath and shame; I saw the Prebendary himself dumbfoundered at the news; I saw myself in Court being tried; and I saw myself—at

the last act of a condemned convict's life. And I saw all these things, I say, together.

It was ten o'clock and past. All was quiet in the prison, when I heard the opening of locks and the sound of steps and of clinking irons. They crossed the court; the door of the ward was thrown open.

'Look, sir,' said the turnkey, 'here's your room, and here's your friend waiting up for you.'

I started from my chair, making my irons clash. Before me stood George himself.

CHAPTER XIV

NEWGATE PRISON

'GEORGE! You here?'

'No other,' he said. He took a step forward. 'These pretty shining things,' he said, looking down, 'make a man walk as gingerly as a passenger in a gale of wind.'

'You, too, in irons, George? How were you taken? You in irons?'

'Why not, if you are, my lad? "Rings on his fingers and bells on his toes, he shall have music wherever he goes."'

'But how comes it? What fatal mischance is this? You had escaped—you got off free.'

'Ay, I got off; I rowed across to the Isle of Dogs. There, seeing no one in pursuit, I left my boat and walked along the river-wall, by the Breach and the Gut and the Ropeyards as far as Wapping.'

'Well, why didn't you stay in Wapping? Why didn't you volunteer for the navy? Why not go on board an East Indiaman or a Baltic ship, even as a common sailor?'

'I thought of these things. I even thought I would be pressed—no hardship for me to go afloat as a common sailor. But then, I haven't told you everything, Nevill; no, no, not everything.' George was one of those to whom the narrative form presents difficulties sometimes insuperable. 'I came to perceive as I walked along that after leaving it all to the Lord, and leading that Tom Fool's Riot on purpose, you know, to let everybody understand that I had left it to the Lord—because no one in his senses would have headed such a bawling mob—it would be worse than cowardly to run away, and, so to speak, take all into my own hands again.'

'This is madness, George. Every man is justified in saving his own life if he can.'

'Not madness; common sense. I will argue out the point with you if ever we find time and a fitting place, which I doubt. When I understood so much, and was enabled

further to perceive that it would be cruel hard upon my soul to top up all my other sins with cowardice, a thing that never tempted me, but rather the reverse, the Lord be thanked, who inclined my heart to keep that law.'

'Go on,' I groaned.

'Many sins, I dare say, I have committed if I knew them; fortunately I do not, a choleric word here and there being always permitted to a sailor—not shameful sins, I am sure. To fight I have always been ready, never have I run away. So, after consideration, I thought I would wait till sundown, and then walk over to Newgate Prison and give myself up.'

'Oh! to throw away your life!'

'No, lad, I put my life in the Lord's hands. Can't you understand? I say, since it is best for Sylvia's sake that I should die, do Thou, O Lord, take my life in whatever way seemest Thee best. That is the whole gist of the thing. As for dying, we confess that we are all in the hands of the Lord, the man at sea and the man on land, the sick man

and the strong man, the young man and the old man. It is the Lord who makes us die: the way and manner of death we know nothing about beforehand. Therefore I do well to leave it openly to the Lord. I would kill myself, but it is a shameful thing to do. Now, having thus resolved, I am content and happy. I fear nothing more. I ask for nothing but that Sylvia may recover and forget me!'

This was the condition of his mind, nor could I by any representations or arguments persuade him that in his hair-brained fight with the press gang, his conduct at the fire, his mad leading of the riot, his was not so much the part of the humble Christian as of the resolute suicide. A man must not kill himself. No, he would not commit that terrible crime. But he would put himself in peril so deadly that unless he had a charmed life he would surely die. That he considered was a righteous thing to do, and a Christian rendering of the commandment. Alas! we were all stark staring mad at this time.

I could not shake him from the convic-

tion that he had done everything a good Christian should. He was so firm in this belief, that his mind was collected and easy; his discourse was cheerful; and his contemplation of the future without fear.

Yet, withal, a sense of the position gave to his thoughts a serious turn. When the clock of St. Sepulchre's, followed by the bell of St. Paul's, struck midnight, he said, as if to himself:

'This place is more solemn than a church; it is like the entrance to a vault; I seem to expect the steps leading down into the grave. Each hour now will bring me nearer to the time when I must walk into my grave, though still young and lusty. Yet a week or two and I shall go down those stairs. Well, I am called away, my day's work is done. To some is granted a short day, to some a long day: in the end it matters little. I shall have a good deal to remember. Sylvia loved me once.'

'George!' I sprang to my feet but sank back again, startled by the clinking of the irons. 'What does it mean? Why have all

these disasters fallen upon us? What have we done? A short while ago, and we were happy—what are we now? Sylvia, I verily believe, is dying; you and I are in prison and will be tried for High Treason; my father, your father—all of them will go in shame and mourning for the rest of their days. What does it mean? Never, never before have I heard of such a wholesale wreck! Never since the days of Job.'

'I have asked the same question, but there is no answer. Man, you might just as well ask why one ship sails safe from port to port and another encounters mutiny on board, fire, leaks, hurricanes, and finally goes to pieces on a hidden rock. There is no answer; wherefore let us seek no more to find one. And now, lad, we will turn in if we can.'

He got up and began to look about the room.

'The quarters,' he said, 'are not bad, but even a Newcastle collier would be ashamed of such a filthy deck. If we could throw open the ports for an hour or so the air would be less fragrant. There has been punch here of

late'—he sniffed the air—'and beer, and tobacco, and the society of women.' Here he picked up a lace mitten dropped upon the floor—'If we are to pass our time this way, my lad, 'twill be a poor preparation.'

He got up and began to examine the beds.

'Here's a drunken beast for you,' he said, gazing upon the prostrate Captain. 'He is a prisoner, I take it, of the unrepentant kind. Well, there are drunken swine outside Newgate. Here is one of another kidney.' (He looked at the sleeping merchant, who lay on his side, his face a lovely picture of Christian virtues, illustrated in the countenance of an elderly London merchant.) 'The good man in his nightcap dreams of St. Paul's Cathedral, I warrant. The beds are well enough, I dare say, but for cleanliness and comfort give me a hammock swinging free before the cockroaches that hide away in the cold latitudes come out again.' (Here the Captain turned his head and half awoke, with a drunken oath.) 'Ay,' said George, 'drink and damn, we know your kind. In Newgate we must expect Newgate birds.'

He lay down, and in a moment his light breathing showed that he had fallen asleep. Strange that a man who in one day had been snatched from the jaws of hell and in the same day had returned to the same perilous place, should sleep so soundly and so peacefully! As for me, I lay awake all night long. I could hear the bell of St. Sepulchre and of St. Paul's strike the hours one after the other. I could overhear footsteps outside the prison, and the voice of the watchman. Happy watchman! He has no irons on his feet and he is free to come and go. In the early morning I fell asleep from weariness. When I awoke, the morning was already advanced; George was already up and dressed; through the open door came a refreshing stream of cold air. Our merchant had left his bed and was dressed and gone into the yard. The Captain still lay on his back, purple-faced, breathing heavily.

'Well, lad,' said George, 'what cheer? I have been foraging—you shall have for breakfast cold meat and bread, with a draught of small ale—nothing better.' He held the

tankard in his hand. 'The air of Newgate is drowsy—I slept till seven. Jump up. There's a pump outside for those who choose to wash in the morning—a Newgate bird ought to neglect that custom I suppose.' His own face was glowing with the cold water of the pump. 'Jump up, man; come to breakfast.' One would have thought we were embarked on some pleasure trip, such was his cheerfulness. 'After breakfast,' he said, 'we will make things ship-shape. A mop and a bucket of water for the walls, a scrubbing-brush for the floor, another for the table and chairs, will improve the quarters. We must get linen somehow, and stockings, and many things. Your hair would look none the worse for a little dressing and your chin for mowing. There is mud on your shoes. Then, how are we off for provisions? The rations amount, I have already learned, to a penny loaf a day. Well, trust me for provisioning the ship. 'Tis a hungry air. I never thought,' he added, after a pull at the tankard, 'that a prisoner in Newgate, so near the appointed end, could

find a draught of small ale so much to his taste.'

Our good merchant here returned, and seeing us engaged upon breakfast, stood over us and, in a fatherly manner, pointed out to us the sin—he feared it was the unpardonable sin—of rebellion. I forbear from repeating the discourse, and at the time I refrained, though with difficulty, from asking him whether the sin of rebellion was greater than that of forgery. George continued his breakfast, preserving the respectful face with which sailors receive a sermon.

'If,' he presently said, 'we are now going to eat, drink, and sleep in the same place for the next three weeks or so, let us first make it habitable for decent folk. That shall be my business. Somewhere in the prison there must be a poor devil who will gladly earn a shilling or two.'

He went out, and presently returned with two fellows carrying mops, scrubbing-brushes, pails of water, and soap. They were prisoners under sentence of transportation, but, as they showed themselves handy, civil, and orderly,

the Governor kept them in the prison, and suffered them to pick up what they could get in jobs for the day, or when some prisoner, more particular than the general run, would have his room cleaned, these men set to work, and began with zeal to wash and scrub. I verily believe the place had not been scrubbed since the Gordon Riots at latest.

In the midst of their labours the Captain awoke, and angrily demanded what they were doing, and who had dared to assume authority in his ward. 'Look you,' said George, 'as for assuming authority, who made you skipper? Lie down, drunken swab, and hold your peace.'

The Captain obeyed: whether awed by the proportions and the resolution of the new comer, or whether still under the influence of the drink. He lay down again and said not a word.

In an hour the place had been thoroughly scrubbed and washed, both floor and walls, and the air of the room was changed.

'Now, my lad,' said George, 'this is better; as for provisions, I have learned that

we can have cold victuals sent in if we pay for them: if we want hot things we must cook them ourselves. Very good then. I promise such a steak for dinner as you never ate before—so juicy and so well cooked—because I shall cook it myself. We may be prisoners, but we shall not starve.'

This promise he kept, and I may safely say that, for a beefsteak or a chop, or anything in that way, no cook ever had a lighter hand or a truer eye than George. Nowhere have I fared better than in Newgate. As for the Captain, he speedily discovered that George was a lad of spirit, a man after his own heart, a gallant cock, whose only fault was that he would not drink, and professed to dislike profane swearing, which was, he declared, the only language fit to be spoken in Newgate Gaol.

Well, but we were not yet settled; for, first of all, we had nothing at all except the clothes in which we stood. Therefore, George sent a messenger into Newgate Street, and there appeared, presently, a polite gentleman, in black silk breeches and white stockings,

his hair powdered very beautifully, who agreed to sell us a change or two of shirts, stockings, and things. This he did, carefully taking our money beforehand, for fear that we might be hanged between that time and the delivery of the goods. Lastly, a barber was found, also a felon from the common side, who dressed our hair and shaved us, so that we were able to present a very respectable appearance, a thing which should be studied as much in a prison as outside it.

'And what have you done, brother?' asked George, looking at the barber's legs, which were decorated like our own, but with a more rusty pair.

'Nothing of the least importance, your honour; not worth making a fuss about.'

'What is it, man?'

'They do say, sir, in their malice, that I was engaged in the coining and passing of bad money.'

'Ha! and what sentence does the Judge pronounce in such cases upon conviction?'

'Exactly the same as for your honour,' the fellow replied with a grin, and pointing

with his finger to his throat. So he gathered up his tackle and withdrew.

The yard of the State side was not crowded. As yet, however, there were no visitors. As the company here is of a much better class (though villains all) than belongs to the Master-felons' side, their behaviour is more seemly. There is no rude horse-play or monkey-tricks; there is little bellowing of coarse songs; there is no open drunkenness, though certainly some of the men seem anxious very early in the day to deaden their anxieties with beer. For my own part I cannot blame them greatly. Any one who has experienced the gnawing anxiety which preys upon the mind before trial, when one fears the worst and has the worst always before his eyes, when a man continually exhorts himself to prepare for the worst, yet cannot—I say, such an one must regard with tenderness the man who yields to the temptation of drink, and either lulls his cares with beer, or uses it to get him Dutch courage.

Yet I have known some who, at the thought of hanging, fell into terrors too

dreadful for speech, yet, when the moment came, walked out to the scaffold with a step as firm and a face as resolute as a brave soldier going into action.

The first effect of imprisonment is to make a man neglect his outward appearance. He no longer washes, dresses his hair, shaves, or changes his linen; his self-respect is gone; he loses his pride; a brave show in dress is a mark with most men of self-respect: in the prison that mark is no longer observed save with one here and there. Our merchant, for instance, was as choice about his linen in Newgate as on 'Change, but then he said he was an innocent man. Most of the men on the State side came into the yard in slippers and a dressing-gown, their stockings in holes, their chins scrubby, their faces unwashed, some with a nightcap on; they lounged about, or if it was too cold for lounging they shuffled about; and everywhere, in all faces alike, the same anxiety in their eyes, the same restlessness, the same desire to chatter about nothing, to drink, still to be moving—anything, anything rather than sit down in silence and to meditate.

It is extraordinary how quickly prisoners will find out the offence with which a new chum is charged. Everybody knew when we went into the yard who we were and what had been done. Everybody knew that George was the leader of a riot in which the name of the King had been traitorously handled, and that I was the Secretary of a seditious society which was said to have set on foot this riot. They regarded us with the curiosity and interest extended to all new comers.

We learned, in course of time, that there is even on the State side a kind of scale for crimes, some being admired and others despised.

On the common side this feeling is well known and understood, their hero being the proud highwayman, and their admiration growing gradually less as one descends to burglar, coiner, footpad, shoplifter, child robber, mudlark, or night plunderer.

Among the better class of rogues a man who had killed another in a fight was held in great esteem, while one who had treacherously

murdered a man with a hatchet was shunned with loathing. There was one fellow among us (a handsome dare-devil rogue of thirty) who was committed for marrying five-and-twenty wives. His method was to hunt about for some woman, a widow for choice, who had money. He would marry her, and after he had secured all the money, he would make off with it, and desert the woman. He had done this in a dozen great towns, leaving a wife in Dublin, Edinburgh, Liverpool, Birmingham, Norwich, and I know not where else. Some of the wives, who seemed only too willing to forgive him, came daily to see him. In the end I believe he got off by causing every single woman to believe that she and she alone, was his one and lawful wife, so that no witnesses appeared for the prosecution. This man was greatly admired for his courage.

Another fellow was much envied for a display of audacity which carried him along for many years of prosperity, though in the end it brought him to the gallows. He personated sailors, and drew their pay and

prize-money. This required great skill and impudence—qualities which are both admired among rogues.

As for our worthy friend, the merchant of Harp Lane, I found that he was an object of contempt. It was true that he had forged a banker's draft, and that for no less a sum than fifteen hundred pounds! Such a magnificent booty made smaller rogues hide their faces, glorious no longer. Fifteen hundred pounds! Such opportunities have these rich merchants on 'Change! Such are the privileges of the great! If that was all, he would have been indeed worthy of respect; but this man spoiled all by his preaching. He exhorted every man, first, on his particular sin which had brought him to Newgate, and on the subject of general virtue next. That which one does not expect even from the Ordinary are we to receive with meekness from a brother rogue?

The crimes of sedition, revolutionary teaching, and rebellion were regarded, I believe, with respect among those who associated them with the transference of property.

London for a whole week in the hands of the mob! Had George Bayssallance effected this and commanded the insurgents he would have been a hero indeed! That he only attempted it was, of course, something to his credit.

At ten o'clock the visitors were admitted. The first to come were the attorneys and their clerks, armed with bags full of papers. And then there was retiring into corners to confer, walking up and down the yard, eager questionings, affectionate wringing of hands—for no man ever appears so much your friend as the attorney who prepares your defence. Alas! in most cases it is labour lost—for the defendant. The attorney secures his pay before he begins. Then came the friends of the prisoners; some were men, but most were women. They brought baskets full of necessaries or luxuries. Now as in this ward the company were of a class higher than that on the common side, so among the women who visited us the emotions of shame, sorrow, and terror were more easily moved; therefore there was weeping enough to tear the heart

out of those who looked on and listened. Yes, from the soft and silent tears of despair to the loud cries and hysterical lamentations of her who fell upon her loved one's neck for the first time in prison, or for the last time in the condemned cell. I declare solemnly that every young man should be taken, as soon as he is old enough to understand the pitifulness of the thing, to Newgate Prison at the time when visitors are admitted, there for once in his life to see and understand for himself how dreadful a thing is crime, if only for the misery and shame which it brings upon those unhappy ones who are bound to the prisoners by ties of blood.

What have they done, these poor women, that they should be made to suffer so? By the iniquity—nay, sometimes by the momentary madness—of the man on whom they are dependent, are they plunged at once into shame, contempt, and poverty. Unto the third and fourth generation, saith the commandment. For so long a time their children lift not up their heads; they lie in the deeps; they are obscure; they are forgotten; when

the memory of the thing is clean forgotten they come forth again, and climb the tree of fortune and fame, like other men.

Heard one ever of a Bishop, and of Bishops there are many of low origin, the son of a hanged convict? or of a Judge, though the Bar is a great nurse of ambition lowly born? Not so; in order to rise in the world one may be the son of a tinker or cobbler, but one must be first the son of an honest man. Unto the third and fourth generation, saith the scripture. Wherefore sometimes I think that for something some ancestor of mine did in his generation were these afflictions laid upon us.

Among the visitors I presently remarked a young gentlewoman of modest aspect, and of great beauty. She was attired plainly, and was accompanied by an elderly servant, who bore a basket upon her arm. She looked about the yard, as one who took no heed of any present, but was looking for one man. Then she espied our worthy merchant of Harp Lane, and made her way through the crowd, followed by her attendant. She was his daughter.

'My child, my Lucinda,' said the good man, kissing her fondly. 'I expected this to-day. Thy mother, my dear, is well, I trust.' Then he marked her pale cheek and red eyes. 'Why, fond one,' he said, 'what occasion is there for tears? Never shed tears over such a trifle as my temporary inconvenience. See! I grow fat—I am jolly—I rest from my labours. The price of stocks disturbs me not. I am on a holiday. It is as if I were standing on the sands of Margate, save that the air here is not quite so balmy. Yet a healthy air—oh! a healthy air—I do well upon it.'

She tried to speak, but her voice stuck.

'I reckon,' he went on, 'that in a fortnight I shall be free again. Yes, they cannot delay the ceremony they call my trial above a fortnight more—ay! In a fortnight I shall be tried. Now, my dear, I have in my own mind arranged all. Your mother and you will be present at the trial. You will come fitly attired in your best to a ceremony in which your father will take the most distinguished place, and receive all the honours of

'"*My child, my Lucinda,*" *said the good man, kissing her fondly.*'

the day. Ha! you shall hear the machinations of the wicked defeated, and the Judge ordering the prisoner to be discharged, without the least stain upon his honour. I should not like you to be waiting at home while these honours were paid me in public. The Court of my Company I shall also invite. One must not neglect the Livery. I look for a banquet in my honour the day after my Triumph in Court.'

The girl smiled, but faintly; then she showed him what she had brought—some confected dainties—pies and such, with wine and a book which he had desired; and then she kissed him and turned to go, but I marked as she walked through the throng how the tears rained down her cheeks, so that it was pitiful to see. She knew the truth, which her father, with such obstinacy, persisted in concealing from himself.

What hath since become of that poor girl, so innocent, so beautiful, so unfortunate, on whom, thus early, was laid so great a load of shame, I know not. She looked so virtuous and modest that I trust the Lord hath kept

her from harm, though to shame she was already handed over.

'Why does she cry?' asked George.

'Because her father is a prisoner. He is to be tried for his life.'

'What! That good old man who preached to us? What has he done, then?'

'He is charged with forging a bank draft, and that for a great sum, indeed. He may be innocent. Indeed, he swears that he is innocent. But he is a prisoner like ourselves, he is to be tried like ourselves, and if he is found guilty——'

'He will be hanged by the neck like ourselves. Poor girl! poor girl! Nevill, this is a dreadful and a terrible place. I would the Lord had ordered otherwise; but one must obey. He knows what is best for Sylvia.'

Then he grew silent for a while.

'Nevill,' he went on, presently, 'it is hard upon my father. As that poor girl will go all her life in shame for her father, so will mine go in shame for his son. I had not thought of him. It is hard for him—yet it was the will of the Lord; clearly the Lord's doing.'

While we thus talked there came toward us, hat in hand, a thin shrivelled up little creature, dressed in black, bowing low.

'Gentlemen,' he said, with insinuating grin, and rubbing his hands, 'I am happy to make your acquaintance, though the circumstances are not so joyful as one might hope.'

'Sir,' said George, 'what may be your business?'

'My business, gentlemen, is to procure the acquittal and release of gentlemen like yourselves, charged with what I may be permitted to call irregularities; irregularities of any description. My name, gentlemen, is very well known in Newgate—very well known and blessed—by all who have at any time resided within these walls. You yourselves must surely have heard the name of Quellet—Samuel Quellet, solicitor and attorney—some say, the Great Quellet.'

'It is an attorney, George,' I said, recognising the man by his manner. It is, indeed, as easy to tell an attorney by his appearance as a carpenter or a brewer, or a man of any other trade.

'Oh!' said George, viewing the man with contempt. 'What can we do for you, brother?'

'Sir, it is not what you can do for me, which is little indeed. It is what I can do for you, and will do, sir—will do—with your permission. My whole life, sir, is spent in doing good to my fellow creatures. I think of nothing else. It is my trade, my pleasure, my duty. I have chosen among the whole of humanity that part of it which I find here. In other words, sir, I conduct the defence of prisoners, and that is my single occupation. Outside, you will hear my name exalted to the skies by grateful multitudes; it has even been proposed at the Salutation Tavern—'twas after the acquittal of an honest gentleman charged with forgery—that the King should be asked to confer upon me the honour of knighthood. Within this prison, there are now a score and more of poor fellows looking to me—happily, with well grounded confidence—for their release.'

'Do you, then, blind the Judge, and make the juries deaf?'

'Ha! ha! Your honour is facetious. I do indeed, in a manner of speaking, affect his Lordship—I say it with respect—with a kind of judicial blindness. I make juries deaf and the Court blind. My methods, sir, are as various as they are ingenious. I look for, and I find, a flaw in the indictment. This established, out steps my friend from the dock and walks away free. I prove an *alibi* by evidence which cannot be overthrown; I cause the witnesses to be terrified and confused, and to commit, unconsciously, acts of gross perjury. I rake up their past lives and make them confess to past crimes and misdemeanours. I show, against the clearest evidence, that the real criminal was another person altogether. There is no end to the twists and turns which I invent to procure the acquittal of my client. In such cases as these,' he added, with emphasis, 'when the life of a gallant young gentleman is at hazard, everything is allowed. Yet, for myself, I hope that I yield to none in religious profession. Every Sunday morning, and not infrequently on Saints' days (when the Court is

not sitting), you may observe me in my pew at the church of St. Clement Danes; it is in the gallery—left hand, looking towards the altar, front row. But, sir, for my clients' sake, I use every form of invention, quibble, and obstruction. I stand on the side of mercy. That is my proud position.'

He ceased, out of breath.

'Well, sir,' said George, 'as for me, you can be of no service, because I shall employ no lawyer.'

'No lawyer? Are you aware, sir, of the charge against you—the very serious charge? No lawyer? Do you know that your life—your life—is not only threatened, but is in most grievous peril?'

'I believe it is,' George replied; 'yet I will have no lawyer.'

'Consider, sir, pray consider. Any poor little shoplifter, any wretched woman who steals a loaf for her starving children, may be condemned to die, but she mostly gets off, because our juries generally refuse to bring in a verdict in such a case. She may hope to get off. But for you there is no hope, no

doubt at all. For, first, you were the leader of a seditious riot in which men bawled for the overthrow of King and Church; next, you were seen, and can be recognised by many as having withstood and fought the constables; thirdly, the temper of the City is hot against you. Every man in the jury-box when he takes his seat will have already condemned you in his heart. The Judge will have condemned you beforehand. There is no hope at all for you except in getting a clever and ingenious attorney, such as myself. Then, indeed, you may hope to come out of court a free man. Otherwise you will come out of it with the rope already round your neck.'

'Yet,' said George, 'I will have no lawyer. Sir, do not pester me; my mind is resolved. But here is my friend, Mr. Nevill Comines, whose case is not so grave; you might perchance try your hand upon him. What say you, Nevill?'

'Why, George, if the gentleman has so Samaritan a disposition as to undertake my cause for nothing——'

'Sir,' said Mr. Quellet, 'nothing would more please me, such is the goodness of my heart. I say it without boasting, because it is a natural gift—just as strength and comeliness belong to this young gentleman, who is resolved to break the hearts of the ladies by getting hanged. But I have a wife and six children depending upon me for their daily bread: I have pew-rent to pay: I have charities to bestow. Hence I cannot afford myself so great a luxury.'

'I have plenty of money, Nevill. What! man! You to want assistance when I can raise as much money as is wanted! Shame!'

'Shame, indeed,' said the attorney. 'We must be spared that shame. Very well, then; that is settled. Since there is no doubt about the money, I will take this case in hand at once. I shall want a fee of a hundred guineas, to be increased by fifty more if—that is, when—an acquittal is pronounced.'

'You shall have it,' said George. 'I will write to the attorney who proved my uncle's will, and give him my dock at Rotherhithe——'

'Ha! he has got a dock at Rotherhithe, and he goes wilfully to his destruction!' said Mr. Quellet.

'He will procure the money, and anything more that I may require. You can go and see him if you please.'

'It need not,' Mr. Quellet replied. 'Give me your bond—your signature—your promise for a hundred and fifty guineas, which I can present to your attorney, and I ask no more.'

So he prepared a paper of some kind, which George signed and his own clerk witnessed. And so I was provided with an attorney for my defence.

I learned afterwards that I had fallen into the hands of a low and creeping creature, who lived by persuading prisoners that he was able to procure them an acquittal if they would give him all the money they possessed. This was not generally much. The fellow had the impudence to make George sign a promise to pay a hundred and fifty guineas in advance, instead of the hundred agreed upon; and I believe that he never, before or afterwards, did such a good stroke of business.

It is true that he had on more than one occasion procured the acquittal of a prisoner; but in most cases the wretches who relied upon him learned too late that they were leaning upon a reed—in other words, that where the case is plainly proved, no wrigglings of a crafty attorney will avail to get a man off.

Mr. Quellet then proceeded to ascertain the particulars of the case as against myself. I told him everything that I could remember. He made notes in a pocket-book, sighed, nodded his head, shook it, wagged it, coughed and hemmed, as if the case was one of prodigious intricacy.

'Sir,' he said at length, 'I must apply to the magistrate for a copy of the information. I knew not when I proposed to undertake your defence for so paltry a sum that it would prove so difficult a job. Do not fear, however. I am, I hope, a man of honour.' He laid his hand upon his heart. 'Had I undertaken this responsible and difficult business for no more than a crown piece, I would carry it through. My wife may grumble;

and Jack—my boy Jack—must go without those new small clothes he was promised; but I am a man of honour. You may trust me, sir; you are in the best hands possible; your acquittal is certain; I see an absolute answer; a clear and certain way out of the business. Sleep easily; look forward with confidence; you are quite safe, sir, I assure you. What? You have heard of Michael Considine, the murderer. Everybody said that nothing could save that vill——, that unfortunate man. I pulled him through—I, myself, no other—I it was who caused the principal witness to be drugged the day before the trial, so that when she went into the box she was so confused that she knew not what she was saying nor what had happened. She contradicted everything she had sworn; and when the Judge threatened to commit her for perjury, she fell into a fit, in which she presently, having been carried out of the court, breathed her last. And Mike Considine escaped. It is true that he was killed a month afterwards in a drunken brawl, somewhere, and his body carried to the middle of the

garden of Russell Square. But he died, I am proud to think, grateful to his attorney. For this day, sir, I can do no more for you. But be easy, be happy. If you could procure for me the defence of your friend, who will otherwise most certainly be hanged, it would be an outward and visible sign, as we say in the Catechism—I hope you are a member of the Church of England—of your gratitude for my services. Think of me, Mr. Comines. Good morning, sir—good morning.'

In the afternoon two more prisoners were brought into the State side. They were the young Templar, the most zealous Republican of our Club, and the Atheist Poet from Oxford, who was equally zealous for the overthrow of everything. Like me, these young gentlemen were now disowned by their parents and were penniless. George paid for all. Had it not been for him, we must all three have gone over to the common side, and lived on the prison ration of a penny loaf a day. Mr. Quellet, on the strength of a second promise, undertook also the defence of these two. I looked daily for the arrest of Richard Archer,

but for some reason or other he escaped, though the most guilty of all. Our president also escaped in a very simple manner, as I afterwards learned. He had taken the precaution to give a false name when he entered the Society, and as he lived at the other end of town, somewhere near St. James's Street, he was not known to anybody. The smaller fry, the mechanics and tradesmen who formed the bulk of our members, were suffered to remain unmolested. Within the walls of Newgate Prison lay the four members whom the Government had resolved to prosecute. To this end had we been brought through our membership of the innocent and convivial Club called the Sublime Society of Snugs.

CHAPTER XV

ON THE MASTER'S SIDE

THUS began our imprisonment in Newgate, a place vile and intolerable to those who cannot afford to pay the exorbitant fees of the better side; noisome and stinking even on that side, with its close yard, which no fresh air seems to reach, and its wards reeking with the fumes of beer, punch, fried onions, toasted herrings, and all the odours that hang about a kitchen where the sluts never open the windows. We began this first period of captivity in the first week of the month of June; it lasted until the third week of October; we spent the whole of the summer and the autumn of the year 1793 within the walls of Newgate, where there is never a green leaf or flower, and the sun only falls upon the yards to make the foul air hot and

to increase the power of the smells. Looking back at that time I marvel how we endured it for so long. But we were young; we expected every day that we should be called up for trial: we were in good heart, and with the help of George's money we were in good case, well fed, and as well lodged as the place allows.

We presently changed the quarters into which we were thrust at first for a more commodious room on the second floor, where we enjoyed better air and more light. This room we shared with our fellow prisoners, the Templar and the Oxonian. I need say but little of these two young men, our companions in misfortune. The former was a brave and ardent youth, all for action, and would have pulled the whole Constitution of Great Britain to the ground and set fire to the wreck in order to establish the Republic, which he thought would prove to be the Kingdom of Heaven itself. The latter was one who desired a Revolution chiefly, I believe, out of pity for the poor and oppressed. To him the destruction of King, Church, and Lords meant the

introduction on a stable basis of universal virtue—the reign of the Christ, whose example he would fain see followed, while he professed not to believe in Him. He readily made verses better than any I had ever before read, and his poetry, like his talk, was full of noble aspirations for universal happiness. It is by such aspirations, whether we own that they are due to a Divine Exemplar or not, that the soul is uplifted; it is also by such aspirations that humanity is advanced. This man, so noble and generous, whose thoughts were always far above the world, they expelled from Oxford and tried for High Treason. I suppose it could not be helped, but I now understand that such an one ought to have been allowed to say what he pleased; he should have been set in a fair garden and ordered to write, to speak, to meditate—to teach and delight mankind. He was a Prophet, who knew what should be, and in time (we hope) shall be; but he thought that merely to state the case was to command reform. In appearance he was tall and fair; his head was small, but beautifully shaped;

his eyes were bright and large; his eager mouth was always trembling in response to his thoughts; his laugh was ready; his rage and scorn against oppression and injustice were readier than his laugh.

We were waiting our trial for High Treason. It seemed certain that we should be committed, and that we must expect a heavy sentence, even a capital sentence. Nay, in our case, a capital conviction was likely. Yet (a thing which one would not expect) after a day or two, this probability caused us no uneasiness at all. I am now able to understand the insensibility with which the fellows on the felons' side, who were all most certainly going to be flogged, or hanged, or transported, await their fate; it is because the mind (even the mind of one of the better sort) cannot endure the continual contemplation of impending misery and pain. We call not the young man insensate because he laughs and sings and lightly makes love; yet he knows very well that the years which quickly pass (alas! how quickly!) will soon bring with them old age, disease, and death. It is much

the same with the poor wretches in prison; they know they are going to be punished—they will suffer the agony of the lash or the torture of the gallows—yet not to-day, not to-day; therefore they sing and drink.

Not to-day. Therefore we laughed and sang, and made ourselves as happy as we could. Prisoners though we were, you might have sought outside in vain for four more cheerful companions. We kept the ward like a ship, having stated times for turning in, getting up, washing the floor, making the beds, cooking the meals, and everything, each man taking his turn and developing dexterity in the various household tasks previously unsuspected. Who, for instance, would have believed that the Poet should have shown a hand so light with the ham and eggs and the frying-pan? Who could have suspected George of genius in discovering when the steak was done to a turn, or, as they say, done to a cow's thumb? In the evening, over a glass of wine, we talked. Heavens! how in those days we talked! With what enthusiasm! with what wild hopes! with what

ardour for the perfecting of mankind! What virtues, what heroism, what glories lay, before our imaginations, in the Republic of the future (the universal Republic of Peace), when every race should rule itself, and there should be no more king or wars; when ambition should cease, and——See. The old talk returns to me. It is five-and-twenty years ago and more, yet again my heart leaps up and my blood quickens, and the old joy of anticipation comes back to me. I believe no longer that this or that form of government can create the virtue of unselfishness. I know that great and many and various are the dangers of Republican rule, yet still I think that under that rule the way of man's advance is the easiest and the most likely to be taken; and still I think that the best chance for the future of the world is always to hold up the banner of Republican equality. This comes of having been twenty years of age when the Bastile fell. The young men of the present have no such opinions.

In one respect we were all four alike. Namely, that we were all cast off by our own

people. Of all the prisoners in Newgate we were the most abandoned by our friends. No one came to see us. To our letters there was no reply; we received no reproaches; we were cut off like so many black sheep. I wrote, for my own part, letters to my father and to the Prebendary explaining how—by what reading and meditation—I had arrived at political convictions of which, I was aware, they could not approve. I informed them how I was led insensibly to taking an active part in the propagation of ideas which seemed to me reasonable in argument and beneficial in their practical application. With this object I became a member, and even the Secretary, of an association or club connected with the well-known Corresponding Society; that our proceedings were always, save on one occasion, conducted in order, and that no disturbance or riot had been sanctioned or approved by myself or by the moderate members of the Club. I concluded with expressing my submission to their displeasure, and begging forgiveness. In fact, my letters were as respectful, I am sure, and as

submissive, as any parent could desire. At the same time I did not pretend to be ashamed of my opinions, or to have changed them in consequence of imprisonment. Finally, I begged of my father to communicate news of Sylvia, and I sent a most tender message to my mother.

No answer came to either of those letters.

Our only visitor during the first part of our imprisonment was the man Quellet, our attorney. He came daily to the prison in search of new clients, and would willingly converse with us, partly because he had obtained, as I have told you, the job of defending the Templar and the Oxonian on the same terms as myself, namely a hundred guineas for each; partly in the hope of bringing George into his net on the same terms; partly because he generally found a bottle of wine in our ward; and though so thin and dried up, to outward appearance, he was a great toper when the opportunity favoured him. As soon as he had got three or four glasses down his throat, his conversation began to turn upon his favourite topic, the

tricks and turns by which he and his friends sought continually to baffle justice and to secure the escape of a criminal. Sometimes (but this was lofty treatment) there would be a flaw in the indictment; generally, he sought to destroy or to pervert the evidence. Once, as he boasted, he caused a pocket to be picked of a certain letter without which the case would fall to pieces; the recollection of this feat caused him the most profound satisfaction, as much as if it had been a good action. At other times he sent the principal witness into the box so drunk that he could say nothing; or he bribed the witnesses to contradict themselves, to mix up events and dates, to declare that on a pitch dark night there was a full moon, and so on. He never failed every day to assure us all three that he had our case well in hand, and could foretell, on his professional reputation, our certain acquittal. Perhaps we believed him. Whether we believed him or not, we were all, I can certify, of good heart. Nay, though we knew that George, who would engage no lawyer, and was certain to be found guilty and to be

condemned, we ceased to concern ourselves about him. His impending fate had no terrors for us, any more than it had for him. I have already explained the reasons of this apparent insensibility. It is, in short, quite true that at this time our position affected not our spirits one whit. We joked and laughed; we feasted; we talked and argued as if we had been in the back parlour among the Snugs; and we even made the evenings merry with the singing of songs.

At first, we daily expected to welcome other members of our Sublime Society. The Chairman, for example. Surely the Chairman was a more important member than the Secretary. As I have already explained, the Chairman had the good sense to be entered under a false name and to live in another quarter of the town, therefore he could not be found. Or there was Richard Archer. Of all our members, none was more dangerous than Richard Archer. And the minute-book of the Society, which had been seized, showed this. Why was not Archer arrested? And many others there were; the tradesmen and

mechanics who formed our rank and file. It had, however, been resolved to pass them over, and to make an example of none but the most prominent. Yet, why not arrest Richard Archer?

And at the outset we expected daily to be upon trial in a week or two. We knew nothing about the delays of lawyers, especially of Crown lawyers. They had us in custody. Very well. That once secured, the rest could follow at their leisure. And in the end it was not till near the beginning of November that we were brought out to stand our trial. We were kept five months waiting. I submit that this is not just to prisoners, guilty or not guilty. They should be tried within a week or two of their committal. Our own case, however, was not so hard as that of Henry Yorke, tried at the York Assizes two years later. The poor wretch languished in gaol for fifteen months before the Government brought him forth for trial. I suppose, therefore, that we should be thankful for our speedy despatch.

Richard Archer, then, was not arrested.

We supposed, knowing that he was deeper in the business than anybody else, that he had been able to give the runners the slip. He might have enlisted or have volunteered for the navy; or he might have gone away into the country—anyhow, he had clearly escaped, a thing for which we were glad, though I, for one, loved him not, and George had quite forgotten his short and fervid friendship for this strange and moody man.

I was, however, uneasy in my mind concerning Sylvia, of whom we heard nothing. Not so George. Unshaken in our belief that his own disappearance (that is his death) was necessary for the recovery of his mistress, he remained persuaded that if she was not yet perfectly recovered that happy event would quickly follow—after the trial and the subsequent proceedings, which he contemplated without the least horror. I think I see him now, sitting with his legs stretched out, a great figure of a man, his kindly face smiling, his eyes calm and serious.

'Why,' he said, 'her recovery is already prepared for her. The Lord hath so ordered it.

Truly, I would rather live for Sylvia than die for her. But if she can no longer so much as endure the sight of me why should I desire to live? Take courage, Nevill—Sylvia is yet neither better nor worse. When I have obeyed the will of the Lord and am gone, she will immediately pick up her spirits and begin to mend. More; she will have forgotten me except as an old playfellow. She will never know that I was made to die for her. And she will marry some other man, more worthy of her. She is a pious soul, and, I think, should marry some minister of the Gospel.'

These things he said not once, but many times, and always with great seriousness, and as one who believed every word of what he said. Now, after three or four weeks of prison, I, who could not share in this belief, could no longer endure the suspense. Since no letter addressed to my father received any reply, I bethought me of my old friend, the Wise Woman of the Precinct. The go-between, the secret messenger, is always the old woman. To her I sent, begging her to come to the prison. This she did very

willingly, finding, as her kind commonly use, a singular pleasure in contemplating men about to die, or to be transported, or flogged, or in any other way under punishment. This pleasure is not altogether confined to her class. I have heard of a gentleman of high rank and noble family who would run over the whole of Europe only to see a man broken on the wheel or tortured. Thereupon Margery came, looking about her with the greatest curiosity, and regarding George especially with peculiar interest, as one who could not possibly escape. When she had done holding up her hands, and crying out on the barbarity of the law in cooping up four such goodly young gentlemen, and when she had refreshed herself in the manner which most she loved, I asked her about Sylvia.

'I saw her yesterday,' said Margery. 'She is much the same. Since you left home she neither mends nor worsens. She remains the same. If you speak to her, she replies. If you ask her to stand up, to sit down, to walk, or to eat, she does it. But she takes

no interest in anything. Her mind is clouded. She weeps no more. I think she has forgotten everything.'

'What did I say?' cried George, with satisfaction. 'Why—so she has really forgotten. Nothing could be better. When I am gone——'

'You won't go,' the Wise Woman interrupted him. 'They say in the Precinct that you must be hanged. Everybody else may escape, but not you. They are bound to hang you because you led the riot. That is what they say. Not so, however. The rope is not yet twisted that will strangle you, and the tree is not yet planted that shall be your gallows. No, young gentleman. Be easy. Sylvia will mend, and you shall escape the gallows. This is not common witchcraft. Those who cause may cure: they may even prolong the spell; but they cannot destroy. And all shall fall again upon their own heads. Oh! you shall learn—you shall find out. The Wise Woman knows something, after all, though she cannot set you free, nor can she bring a remedy to the poor young lady.

Strange that George should in his madness prove right. Sylvia was no worse. Why, this was what he said! Was George Bayssallance also among the prophets?

Then we asked her after the elders. Everybody knew, she said, that the Lieutenant refused to speak of his son, and that Mr. Comines said openly that he had no longer a son. So much one expected. I sent, however, a letter privately to my mother to which I presently received a letter by the same messenger, and so two hearts were lightened.

Before our Wise Woman went away I inquired cautiously after Richard Archer. She looked at me suspiciously.

'What do you know about Richard Archer?' she asked, quickly.

'Why, I know that he is—well—organist and schoolmaster.'

She still looked suspicious.

'What more should I know? Where has he gone to?'

'Where should he go? He still teaches school and makes the music.'

'Still teaches school?'

'Why not?'

The Wise Woman did not know everything. So much was certain. But Archer still to continue at his business! Why, he was the most fiery of all our club, more fiery than the Poet even. He it was who planned the riot, he who put George on to be its leader, he was the most guilty of all. And yet the Government, which had in the books of the club, clear proof of this, did not arrest him. What could this mean? We were soon to find out.

CHAPTER XVI

A TRUE BILL

The delays of the law in bringing a prisoner up for trial are in one sense wisely ordered in the prisoner's interest, so that nothing shall be done in a hurry or in a passion. But they add greatly to the horrors of a trial.

In our case we were arrested in May, we were not tried until the end of October. I have said that we managed to preserve a show of cheerfulness during the summer, though the air of a prison in August suffocates. In September we learned that a Special Commission of Oyer and Terminer had been issued under the Great Seal to inquire of certain Treasons and Misprisions of Treason within the County of Middlesex. This brought the nature of the case home to us.

George alone remained unaffected. 'So,'

he said, 'I began to think that they had forgotten us. Well, the sooner the better.'

Three weeks later the Special Commission was opened on Thursday, the 12th day of September, at the Session House, in Clerkenwell. It shows the temper of that Government at the time, and their apprehensions as to the extent of the danger, that so much importance should be attached to a little insignificant club and to a petty riot. But as I have already shown, no one knew how widespread were the meshes of the Corresponding Society or the magnitude of the Conspiracy. The President of the Commission was none other than the Lord Chief Justice, Sir James Eyre. With him sat the Lord Chief Baron of His Majesty's Court of Exchequer, Sir Archibald Macdonald; Sir Beaumont Hotham, Baron of the Court of Exchequer; Sir Francis Buller, Justice of the Court of Common Pleas; Sir Nash Cross, Justice in the Court of King's Bench; Sir Soulden Lawrence, also Justice in the Court of King's Bench. With these great potentates of the Law sat also many Justices of the

Peace. So great was the importance attached to four simple young men; such honour was done to the Sublime Society of the Snugs to which they belonged; so mighty was the alarm caused by the shouting of a hundred disorderly lads through the City of London on a Sunday afternoon. After the Commission had been duly read, the Sheriff proceeded to deliver the panel of the Grand Jury. This was called over, and the Jury, twenty-one in number, all of them gentlemen of position and character, were duly sworn.

This done, Chief Justice Eyre delivered his charge to the Grand Jury.

I have since read this address, which, I doubt not, contained the whole law. The Grand Jury have nothing to do but to follow the directions of the Judge when he lays down or expounds the law. It is not for an unlearned person like myself to presume even to question the law as laid down in that charge. I would only point out, however, that when the Judge had delivered himself of the following passage, no other course was possible for the Jury but to find a true bill;

and that if such is the law, it clearly appears that every person desirous of any change or reformation is compassing the King's destruction. I am no lawyer, but if this is law, where is the liberty of which we boast?

'A project to bring the people together in convention, in imitation of those national conventions which we have heard of in France, in order to usurp the Government of the country, and any one step taken towards bringing it about, such as, for instance, consultations, promoting of committees to consider of the means, acting on those committees, would be a case of no difficulty. For it would be the clearest High Treason: it would be compassing and imagining the King's death, and not only his death, but the death and destruction of all order, religion, laws, all property, all security for the lives and liberties of the King's subjects.'

After the delivery of the charge, the Sheriff handed into Court the panel of the Petit Jurors.

On Monday, October the 7th, after sitting and deliberating for twenty-six days, during

which they heard the principal part of the evidence, the Grand Jury returned their verdict. As for us, during this time, we only heard that the proceedings were being held, and had no voice or say in the matter at all. I am astonished, now that I have read the Chief Justice's charge, that there should have been any delay at all, because, knowing the facts of the case, I should myself, had I been on the Grand Jury, have returned a verdict in a quarter of an hour.

The Grand Jury then, nearly four weeks after the Chief Justice had charged them, returned a True Bill for High Treason against the following: First, George Williams, Chairman or President of the Club or Association called the Sublime Society of Snugs, not yet in custody. You have already heard that this prudent person, who was entered in our Society under a false name, and lived in quite another quarter of the town, escaped detection and was never brought to trial. Next, against George Bayssallance, of the Oak Apple Dock, Redriff, owner of the aforesaid dock, formerly third mate on board the *Hooghly*,

East Indiaman; Nevill Comines, Clerk in His Majesty's Office of the Admiralty; John Campbell Power (this is the young man whom we called the Templar), of the Inner Temple, student-at-law; and Arthur Hallett, late of Merton College, Oxford, gentleman—all for High Treason.

Our attorney came to tell us this news. He rubbed his hands and nodded his head. 'Joyful news, I call it, gentlemen, because your trial cannot now be any longer delayed, and with your trial will come your freedom; that is'—he looked at George and shook his head—'the freedom of those who use the weapons of defence which Providence has put into their hands. I say Providence, gentlemen, who has found for you one acquainted with the stratagems of the law; who is also a stickler for the Church, and a pew-holder in the church of St. Clement Danes. For those, I say, who disdain not to use this weapon thus providentially placed ready to their hands—I say that this intelligence, which would dash the spirits of others, should be considered joyful.'

'Very like. Very like,' said George. 'You will all be acquitted, lads. So much the better for you.'

'But you, my dear sir—you—you—the most guilty of all—it is not yet too late,' cried the attorney. 'Even now there is time. What! A thousand ways are open——'

'No,' said George. 'One way alone is open. Man, trouble me no more.'

For the moment Mr. Quellet desisted. There was a look in George's face which commanded obedience. He sat down by the fire in silence; while the attorney, drinking a glass of wine—say, rather, a bottle of wine—proceeded, as usual, to boast of his tricks. One trick of his he did not relate; namely, that of bribing the turnkeys with a percentage or commission on all moneys he obtained from prisoners who employed him at their suggestion. Nor did he warn us—though he must have known all along—that nothing he could do would be of the slightest avail in our case, of which the facts were indisputable. Yet he took three hundred and fifty guineas from us—that is, from George—for pretending

to conduct a defence where there was no defence possible. 'Tis the trade of a fox.

Then for a week we heard nothing more. But a heavy load lay upon our spirits. We laughed no more, nor did we sing. On Sunday, when we attended the service in the chapel, I trembled, thinking that perhaps in a week or two we ourselves might all four be sitting in the condemned pew like the poor wretches who lay there huddled together like sheep waiting for the butcher.

On the Monday following, however, a turnkey brought us a summons from the Governor, who ordered us to attend at his private house. Accordingly we followed, and were taken to a room reserved for such communications as that made to us.

We found a gentleman seated at a table, on which were four small packages of paper. He was an elderly man in a full wig, yet not a barrister or a clergyman; he was dressed in black, with very fine lace at his wrists, in the old fashion. He held in his hand a snuff-box, and he was conversing with the Governor, who sat beside him. At the back of his chair stood a clerk, obediently waiting.

'So,' said this gentleman, 'these are the prisoners, are they?'

He looked at us sternly, and shook his head.

'Misguided young men,' he said to the Governor, in a low voice. 'Pity! Pity! See the end of it.'

'These are the prisoners,' said the Governor.

'Gentlemen'—he turned to us—'the Solicitor to the Treasury, Mr. White, hath a communication to make on the part of the Crown. I entreat your attention.'

'George Bayssallance,' began Mr. White, reading our names, one by one. Each man answered in his turn.

'I have to inform you that a True Bill has been found against all of you by the Grand Jury summoned and sworn for the purpose. A copy of the Indictment has been prepared for each. It is here.' The clerk distributed these documents.

'Next a list of the jurors impanelled by the Sheriff has also been made for every one of the prisoners, and is hereby delivered to you, so that through your counsel you may

challenge any or every one of them.' The clerk distributed this paper.

'Lastly a list of the witnesses who will be called for the Crown has also been drawn up for every one.' Here the clerk gave us the list.

'You are thereby enabled, through your counsel, to learn beforehand the nature of the evidence that will be produced in Court. That is all I have to say.'

The turnkey opened the door, and conducted us back to our ward.

Then I confess, a great heaviness fell upon my mind. And I could perceive that two of my companions were equally affected. As for George, nothing moved him. He tossed the papers on his bed, and went on with the work in hand, which was the preparation of a stew for dinner, peeling the potatoes and slicing the onions and carrots, as if nothing had happened.

Our attorney, however, who was in the prison, hurried to our ward to receive the documents. First, he opened and read out aloud the indictment, which was truly the

most long-winded paper I have ever seen or heard. Yet Mr. Quellet read it with round and swelling voice, and with as much satisfaction as a poet shows in reading a fine ode. The longer and more wordy is a paper, the greater is the pleasure felt by a lawyer. What the whole amounted to you can easily understand. It was a charge, in short, of High Treason.

'Yes,' said the attorney, contentedly, ''tis a very fine indictment, truly. Oh! you gentlemen of the Treasury know how to draw up an indictment. So much I willingly concede. It is in the handling of the materials that our skill comes in. There you own our superiority, I believe. Well, we shall see. Luckily for you, gentlemen—I mean for three of you—that I was enabled to become an instrument—I say—an instrument. Well,' he sighed, 'let us see the panel. Anyone can frame an indictment. It takes a jury to believe it, and witnesses to prove it. And here, gentlemen, I think you will first begin to admire my skill—the skill of the lower branch. For I shall so challenge and pull to

pieces—through my counsel—every man, that they shall with difficulty get a jury at all.'

'Yet,' said George, 'considering that in the long run they will find a jury, what does that help?'

'That helps greatly. With submission, sir, you know nothing whatever about the subject. You have never, I take it, been on your trial before. Any pickpocket could answer that question for you. Every delay, every difficulty, every impediment makes for the prisoner. That is why our ingenuity is always inventing fresh obstacles. What! Think you that the jury sit unmoved when they see counsel (employed and instructed by the attorney) straining every nerve, seizing on every point of law, to defeat the prosecution? Not so, gentlemen, believe me. Often have I said to myself, when I have witnessed and heard such noble efforts, that were I on the jury I could not resist those efforts—I must give way, and return an acquittal. The feelings, gentlemen, the emotions of the jury, must be considered.'

'We have next'—he went on turning over the papers—'a list of the witnesses to be produced by the Crown. Let us see whom they will call. A shabby lot, I warrant. Constables—what jury regardeth the oath of a constable? Runners—a corrupt crew—we shall make mincemeat of them. Yes, as I thought. Here are constables who speak to the riot itself. That does not concern you three gentlemen. Yes, they will speak glibly. But wait until my counsel tackles them. Then, if you please, another turn shall be played. But I forgot—you, sir,' he addressed George, 'persist even now in refusing the aid of the counsel. Your fate be upon your own head. Now, gentlemen, as regards yourselves. There is the landlord of the tavern where you met. What can he depose? That a convivial association, known as the Sublime Society of Snugs, met there once a week, and that he provided them with liquor and tobacco. Very well. Then there is the book of minutes and the list of members. The book of minutes—in your handwriting, Mr. Comines. Yes, that may be difficult—to an

unpractised hand it might be a very awkward piece of evidence. However, prove to me, if you can, that it is in your handwriting. Next, prove to me, if you can, that the contents are treasonable. Eh? Then there is the Deputy Marshal, who arrested you, and there is one Richard Archer.'

'Who?' we all cried out, startled.

'Richard Archer, schoolmaster of St. Katherine's Hospital.'

'Oh!' cried one of us, 'Richard Archer? Is it possible? Richard Archer?' from one to the other (excepting George) passed the word. 'Richard Archer? It cannot be.'

'Richard Archer, Schoolmaster of St. Katherine's Hospital,' repeated our attorney.

'But,' I said, 'he was foremost among us. Archer was our most zealous speaker; Archer was the leader of the more violent among us. It was Archer who dragged George into the riot; it was Archer who enlisted him; it was Archer who designed a universal and simultaneous rising.'

The attorney nodded his head and repeated

his words. 'Richard Archer, Schoolmaster of St. Katherine's Hospital.'

We looked at each other in amazement. This, then, was the reason why he, the worst of all, had escaped arrest.

'Richard Archer, gentlemen, has turned King's evidence,' said the attorney. 'Why, had you told me about him, I should have warned you to expect this fact. We who have to do with Courts and criminals know very well that when a crew is broken up or a gang clapped into prison it is always the one most deeply implicated who is the first to become King's evidence, if the Government will accept him. He thinks, you see, to save his own neck by tying the rope round the necks of his friends. Honour among thieves, they say. Ha! they know nothing; only a Newgate attorney knows the truth. Gentlemen, there is no honour at all among thieves, but rather treachery, villainy, and cheating. And if no honour among thieves, how, saving your presence, can one look for honour among conspirators? Well, Mr. Bayssallance, I hope you are quite satisfied now.'

'I am perfectly satisfied,' said George.

This, then, was the end of so much zeal. Archer had turned King's evidence.

'George,' I said, 'I can understand it all. This man has compassed your destruction and mine as well; he is the cause of the whole trouble. Can you see? Are your eyes opened? This man, your friend, in whom you confided more than in your old friends—this man, who has never ceased to envy and to hate you—has devised a hellish plot to ruin and destroy you, and with you us as well. You were too prosperous and happy for him. He was filled with jealous hatred. I understand it all. What if, by some devilish machinations, he has brought that affliction upon Sylvia's head?'

'What does it matter?' George replied, unmoved. 'The man may be a villain; well, then, he was suffered to be a villain. So that I understand the Lord's will in this business, why should I inquire how it was brought about? Villain or true man, I have no further concern with him.'

'The poor gentleman is mad,' whispered

the attorney. 'No one but a madman would talk of his trial in such a way. Oh! he is mad. Well, gentlemen, you might have suspected this man. Of course, I fully understood that there would be King's evidence; there always is. Otherwise there would be no trials of any kind possible. Leave your case with me. Before that witness leaves the box he shall wish he had been in the dock, quiet and comfortable, with nobody to ask him questions. Rely upon that, gentlemen.'

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME

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